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["THERE IS NO ONE I SHOULD LIKE TO MARRY," SAID ARLINE RUSHTON, "AND I THINK NO ONE WANTS TO MARRY ME!"]

A LATE ATONEMENT.

CHAPTER I.

In all Hertfordshire there is no prettier village than Digby End, which, though less than thirty miles from London, for its beauty and picturesque scenery might well be treble that distance.

Digby End is five miles from a railway station and nearly as many from the quaint old town of Kesterton, whose one irregular street of old-fashioned shops seems quite a bustling thoroughfare to the homely villagers of Digby End, who, as the wildest excitement within their reach, like to go to Kesterton on market-day, and stand in the winding High Street with their week's industry of yards and yards of straw-plait festooned over their arm, until the wary dealer comes round and purchases the lot at such a small price one wonders it was worth their while to spend so much time on it, let alone walking the nine miles to and from their homes and the market place.

Digby End, though beautiful, is proverbially dull, duller perhaps than many another place of its size; besides the cottages proper, it boasted a church, a chapel, one small shop, and what every Digby End inhabitant was secretly proud of—the great house, the centre of attraction to every loyal-minded villager, and which was honestly as fair a homestead as anyone could wish for, and the property of James Rushton, J.P., a venerable old man with snow white hair, a kind word for all who knew him, and an almost idolatrous love for his only child, the sunshine of his old age—Arline.

Miss Rushton had been a pretty girl, she was now a handsome woman not far off thirty. In the humble opinion of Digby End it was high time she married. Strange to say, though she had lived most of her life among them, having come to the great house when her father inherited the estate full twenty years before, Arline Rushton was not a favourite among her neighbours either rich or poor; her father doated on her, her mother thought her perfect, no expense or care was spared on her education, she was pretty, graceful and

accomplished, but she had not the gift of winning love.

"She's just like one of them foreign lettuces," said the old gardener, when he and one of his friends were discussing Miss Arline, "she's nice enough to look at but she's no heart."

However, the people most concerned in her, Squire Rushton and his wife, saw no fault in their daughter. Arline came out at eighteen and received a great deal of admiration, people who only met her in London could not see so much of her character as the Hertfordshire villagers, and more than one man high up in worldly honours asked her to be his wife; she refused firmly, and people began to say she was ambitious and had set her heart upon a title, if so the title never came. It was two or three years now since the Squire had gone to London for the season, and though Arline paid long visits to friends from time to time, so quote the simple Digby End phrase, "no thing came of it," and she was still unprovided with a partner for life.

The Squire was getting old, he was seventy-five, and his wife's death had been a terrible

blow to him, even though he had never studied her wishes as he studied Arline's.

Mrs. Rushton was a gentle, sweet-faced woman, who looked as though, despite her prosperity, she had some secret care, there was a sadness about her face nothing could remove, and yet the man who loved her and knew her hidden grief, would not bend his iron will to give her what she craved for, she had no intimate woman friend of her own rank, and husband and daughter never seemed to understand the yearning wish of her heart.

When she was dying, the old housekeeper who nursed her tenderly, said she knew there was something on her lady's mind, often she would find her with her Bible in her hand and the tears raining down her face, but when with blind entreaty the faithful servant begged to know what troubled her mistress, the invalid always shook her head, only once did she speak of herself.

"Things look so different when one is near death," she said on this occasion, "money is not all powerful then, Martha."

"Money can't save life, ma'am," confessed the old servant, tearfully, "or you would get well if the master spent every penny of his fortune."

Mrs. Rushton smiled faintly.

"I know he loves me very dearly, but he does not understand a mother's love. I have tried to do my duty, Martha, but my heart has been slowly breaking all these years; there's never been a day but I have longed for my darling, and wondered what shelter covered her golden head."

Now Arline was Mrs. Rushton's only child, and her hair was black as the raven's wing, not by the strongest effort of fancy could the head of the young heiress have been called golden, so the faithful Hobbs decided her lady's mind must be wandering. She never spoke of that conversation to any human creature, only when the gentle mistress of Digby-place—as the great house was called—lay dead, and Mr. Rushton was discussing the funeral arrangements with his secretary, he suddenly sent for the housekeeper, and asked, sharply,—

"Has any stranger been here, Hobbs, any young—woman asking to see my wife?"

He paused in the middle of his sentence, as though at first he had meant to describe the possible visitor by some gentler term than "woman," and he seemed impatient of the answer.

"No one, sir."

"Well, if she comes now, remember Miss Arline and I can see no one, no one at all. You need not mention this in the household, Hobbs."

Hobbs held her tongue. The mysterious visitor never came, but the old servant found a clue to her master's inquiries, when she was helping Miss Rushton to arrange her mother's private possessions, sorting those the young lady desired to keep for herself from others she intended to give away. There, in Mrs. Rushton's jewel case, half-hidden from view by its costly trinkets, they came upon a leathern case. Arline opened it half-carelessly, she had never seen it before, and could not guess its contents. The spring fell back, and revealed a picture, a little family group taken in the old fashioned way that was customary before photography came into vogue, faded and blurred as were some of the lines, Mrs. Hobbs recognised the centre figure of the little group in a moment, it was Mrs. Rushton; on her lap sat a smiling baby, and on either side, two children, boy and girl. It was no secret in the family that Arline had possessed a brother who died before the Squire came into his property; but who was the pretty, fair-haired girl whose head rested so confidently on Mrs. Rushton's shoulder?

"Did you ever have a sister, Miss Arline?" asked the housekeeper, as the young lady shut up the portrait with a snap, as though displeased at herself for opening it.

"Why do you ask?" she inquired, haughtily; then her mood changing, she said

in a much milder tone. "You have been in the family so long Hobbs, you will keep our secret. I had a sister once and she is dead to us. Papa can never bear her name mentioned."

Martha Hobbs could put two and two together as well as most people. She guessed that the pretty child in the picture had grown up as fair as her mother and married for love. Knowing the overweening pride of the Rushtons she could quite believe the Squire would cast her off if she gave him a son-in-law he considered beneath him. This explained the mother's dying regrets, her pitiful remark that money seemed of very little consequence when one was near death. It explained, too, the Squire's order that if any stranger called she was to be told no one could see himself or his daughter.

"But, if she did come," thought Mrs. Hobbs to herself "she shouldn't go away without a kind word, and just a hint that her mother loved her dearly, and thought of her at the last. Well, they say there's a skeleton in every closet but I never thought of this one. I'd have said the family hadn't a secret anywhere."

Mrs. Hobbs was quite mistaken, they had two.

Things settled down again after Mrs. Rushton's death, Arline and her father were inseparable, and seemed indispensable to each other.

Miss Rushton gave up her long visits, and never went from home unless the Squire accompanied her. They received guests at the Place; friends from London often stayed with them.

Arline's pretty chestnut ponies were known within ten miles of Digby End. She went out to parties and entertainments, giving them in her turn.

She presided gracefully over her father's house, and dispensed his charities impartially. Prosperity agreed with her, and the years that passed only added to her attractions, changing her into a stately, dignified woman, who looked fit to rule over a large establishment.

Friends talked of her devotion to her father, and called it "beautiful." It was only the simple villagers who counted up the Christ-masses since Miss Arline came of age, and decided it was time she married.

Something of this occurred to the Squire himself at last, and the very February that the 92nd Regiment were preparing to leave Rudlan he broached the subject to Arline.

It was just two years since her mother died. She had put off her mourning dress, and wore a soft winter gown of ruby velvet with ruffles of rare old lace at the neck and sleeves; dinner was over, the Squire had gone back to his easy-chair near the drawing-room fire. Arline, thinking he was going to sleep—his usual practise in the interval before coffee—had taken up a book, but he asked her to put it down.

"I want to speak to you, my dear. How old are you, Arline?"

Miss Rushton looked a little surprised.

"I was twenty-seven last Christmas Eve, papa. Surely you have not forgotten."

"And I am seventy-five; there are nearly fifty years between us, my dear, and so it seems to me that a great part of your life must be lived without me. I love you very dearly, Arline, and I would fain leave you safe in a husband's care before I join your mother."

Two bright red spots burned on Miss Rushton's cheeks, the book on her lap fell to the ground with a sudden noise. She looked strangely dismayed as she said,—

"I have no wish to be married, papa. Nothing would induce me to leave you."

"But, Arline, consider. I have passed the three score years and ten the Psalmist calls man's allotted time of life, and my health gives many signs of breaking. I can leave you well provided for, my dear, but you would be terribly lonely."

"Please don't talk of it," pleaded Arline, softly, "it only makes me unhappy. There is no one in the world I should like to marry, and I think I may safely say there is no one who wants to marry me."

"I am very glad to hear it."

Arline opened her eyes and smiled frankly. "Why, papa, I thought the drift of this serious conversation was to tell me you wanted me to be married."

"So I do; but I would only give you to a man worthy of you. We have had one undesirable marriage in the family, I do not want your's to be another."

Miss Rushton turned a bracelet on her arm. She did not interrupt the Squire's reverie, and he went on slowly.

"I always considered Freda's conduct broke your mother's heart. Do you remember your sister at all, Arline?"

"I can just recollect her coming home from school, and mamma looking so proud and happy. She stayed with us some weeks, and then she went away, and you told me I was never to mention her name again."

"She eloped with an artist," said Mr. Rushton, as bitterly as though he had said his daughter had married a chimney sweep, "a man who had not a penny in the world he did not earn, and who frankly told me his father had kept a shop. I never loved Freda as I love you, Arline, but I must confess I was surprised at her infatuation."

"Have you ever seen her since?"

"Never!" The old man drew himself up to his full height. "She wrote to your mother during the first two years after she left us, but I took care my wife should never see the letters. It was the only difference of opinion I and your dear mother ever had; she was so gentle and yielding herself, she could not understand my keeping firm. I fear she thought I was hard on Freda."

"I wonder what has become of her?"

The Squire shrugged his shoulders.

"She is probably living in a six roomed house in some cheap suburb, with a brood of unruly, poorly-fed children. I know this much, her husband never made a mark in his profession. I took the trouble to inquire some time ago. No picture of his was ever exhibited at the Academy or other famous place, most likely he subsided into a second rate drawing master at some large school."

"If you have so sad a picture of Freda's fate, papa, why do you wish me to marry?"

"Because I want you to feel your position is assured. I have saved money for you all these years, you will have thirty thousand pounds whenever I am gone; but a woman wants something more than money, she needs a home and a settled sphere of her own."

Arline did not look at her father as she answered.

"I can never love another home so well as Digby Place, if I have to lose you, papa, I would rather stay on here."

The Squire opened his eyes in surprise.

"Why, my dear, you surely did not think I could leave you Digby Place. I'd soon do it if I could, but the worst of these old properties is one has but a life interest in them. I inherited the estate from my uncle, and as soon as the breath is out of my body it will be the property of my distant cousin Digby Rushton. I married hoping I should leave a son of my own behind me. I am not complaining, my dear child, you are dearer to me than half-a-dozen sons, but you cannot inherit Digby Place!"

There was a dead silence. Arline was wondering why she had been left in such ignorance. Looking back she could just remember their coming to Digby Place, it was but a few months after her sister's loss, and while they still wore mourning for her brother. She could recollect in those early days how people had pitied her mother for having no son and heir.

She, a spoilt child of seven, had been rather indignant that anyone should think a boy would have been preferable to herself, so this

was what the pity meant the moment her father died she must leave Digby Place and make way for a stranger!

"I wonder I was never told," she said at last. "Do you know, papa, wherever I have been people have seemed to take it for granted that I should be your heiress."

"My dear Arline, I do not care a rap for what the world believed, you, I fancied, were safe from all mistakes since you knew you had an elder sister, if the law had allowed one of you to inherit, Freda's claim would have been before yours!"

Arline hesitated. At twenty-seven she was shrewd and clear sighted. She knew perfectly that a great deal of the notice and attention she had received since she had been grown up had been paid to her as her father's heiress. Was it possible that her neighbours did not know of the entail upon Digby Place?

"You can guess my wishes now perhaps," said the old man, fondly. "There is one way and only one by which you can remain the honoured mistress of this house, marry my cousin Digby Rashton, and as his cherished wife bear your mother's name and fill her place!"

"Papa! why I have never even seen Mr. Rashton. He may be a married man with half-a-dozen children for all we know to the contrary!"

"He is just one-and-thirty, and a bachelor. He has spent nearly ten years in India and has just returned to England for a year's holiday. I have asked him to spend part of it at Digby Place."

Arline rose and poked the fire with a little more violence than it needed.

"Papa, I can't marry him," she said, firmly, as she sat down. "I don't like the idea!"

"You said a little while ago, Arline, that there was no one in the world you wished to marry—no one who wanted you to be his wife, if this be so you are entirely free, and cannot refuse to make Digby's acquaintance, and listen to his suit."

"He may not fall in with your wishes, papa," suggested Arline, hopefully.

The Squire smiled proudly. "If he is heart-whole, Arline, I don't believe he can be thrown into your society without learning to care for you. My dear," and the old man's voice was almost piteous in its entreaty, "all I ask is that you will give the young fellow fair play. Don't make up your mind against him till you know him, and if he asks you to be his wife, remember that by consenting you will gratify my last earthly wish."

She did not answer him, she could not, both hands had gone up to hide her face, people were mistaken when they called Arline heartless, she could love and love dearly, she had a warm, tender affection for the old Squire, and would have sacrificed much to gratify him; but, alas! he had made a request she could not grant; for Arline to agree to marry Digby Rashton was not merely distasteful or disagreeable—but simply impossible!

CHAPTER II.

It was early spring when the Royal mail steamer *Grecian*, homeward bound from Radland, reached Southampton. The 92nd Regiment were to be stationed at Plymouth, but the chaplain's long leave began when they landed, and so he was free at once to hurry to London, and deposit this precious trust with Messrs. Davidson and Co.

It had been a pleasant but uneventful voyage. There were, as is usual at that time of year, crowds of passengers coming to England for pleasure or change, but though there were many young ladies on board quite ready to smile on Mr. Fenton, and though Miss Lucie Taylor ably seconded her sister's wishes on her behalf, the chaplain escaped all matrimonial schemes, and returned to England as

fancy free as when he left it, though in other respects his prospects were widely altered.

Colonel Cooper who had always liked Ronald, did not hesitate to endorse Dr. Browne's advice, and urged the young man to leave the regiment, and settle down in some quiet English village.

"You know, Fenton," he said, smilingly, "you are so much richer than anyone else in the Ninety-second, that you'll be expected to be a general benefactor; but I'll not say any more. You have six months' leave, and I'm pretty well sure you will find a wife to help you spend Mr. Griev's legacy, and to teach you to desire a more independent position."

Ronald smiled. The Colonel did not know the search he had promised to undertake he thought, or he would not speak so confidentially, as for Fenton himself his prevailing feeling, when he thought of the future, was anxiety. He was a conscientious, upright man, and he could not get that death-bed scene out of his mind. He felt that if he failed to trace Will Trevlyn's widow and children, and so could not make the long-delayed atonement, he should never forgive himself. It was clear to him, even now at the outset of his search, that if he did not find a clue in six months, he must perforce resign his appointment, since stationed at Plymouth or wherever else the 92nd Regiment happened to be quartered, it would be quite impossible for him to pursue his investigation. With this thought in his mind he made no protestations when the Colonel predicted he would never resume his old duties. He only smiled gravely, and answered it was his best wish to return to his post in the autumn.

Throughout the voyage he had kept a careful watch on Hester Dixon, but though the Cooper children were continually claiming his companionship and he saw a good deal of their nurse, he quite failed to discover whether the widow had come to England on any particular errand.

Common sense told him even if she had suspected Mr. Griev's secret and knew the contents of the iron bound chest bequeathed to himself she would hardly attempt to steal it. Certainly not while it was in the ship's hold guarded by the ship's officials. It was far more likely (if Hester were really going to England for any purpose connected with Ronald's search) her idea was to trace out the Trevlyns for herself and extract a heavy sum of money from them for the price of her secret.

It was when Mr. Fenton found himself on the platform at Southampton that Hester spoke to him in her own true character. Throughout the voyage she had simply been Mrs. Cooper's nurse, but as she passed him on her way to the third-class carriages in the rear and saw the pile of luggage a porter wheeled on a truck before him she faced round and said sharply,—

"The sooner you are free of that red case, sir, the better. You may paint up the outside, but you can't alter what's underneath. It's cost more than one life already, so you'd better be careful."

The porter overheard the speech and bade her angrily begone and not stand there blocking up the way, but all the same when she had obeyed him he eyed the case a little suspiciously, and said, awkwardly,—

"I suppose there's nothing explosive in it, sir, it's mighty heavy for its size?"

"It's quite harmless, though very valuable," said Ronald, quietly. "I suppose I can't take it in the carriage with me by paying extra?"

The porter thought not, but after a moment's reflection he suggested by taking the whole of a first-class carriage the point might be conceded, and armed with six tickets Mr. Fenton found himself and his precious trust fairly on their journey.

It was not altogether a pleasant experience for the young clergyman. Though a quick train it stopped at two or three important stations, there were many passengers waiting at each, and in the crowded state of the train

several persons were attracted by what seemed to them a nearly empty carriage. The guard came promptly to Mr. Fenton's rescue, and declared the gentleman had taken the whole compartment, but murmurs arose, and one ill-natured old lady declared he must be mad to want to travel about with a red coffin.

Again and again poor Ronald wished the case had been of any other shape. He even regretted having it in the carriage with him in the face of the very sharp criticisms hurled at him and it by some late passengers at Basingstoke.

But the longest journey has an end, and at last the train steamed slowly into Waterloo station, where he had had the forethought to telegraph for a private omnibus to meet him.

The driver looked very suspiciously at the red case, and to him Mr. Fenton explained that it contained gold and other valuables, that it had been duly examined by the custom house officials at Southampton, and having passed their scrutiny could not be of a dangerous nature.

"It's the shape, sir," said the man, civilly enough. "Why, you'd only have to cover it with a cloth and it'd look like a coffin. But I suppose I must take your word for it that it's harmless, only I'd feel obliged to you if you'd let me draw the blinds down. It wouldn't do our omnibuses any good for people to look in and see that."

Ronald complied at once, and was soon rattling away towards the Strand. A quarter of an hour brought him to the bank, and here fortune seemed to favour him, for Mr. Davidson was in and disengaged. Two stout porters were requisitioned and carried the case after Mr. Fenton into the banker's premises, and then with a sigh of relief Ronald went out to recompense the driver of the omnibus, bestowing on him such a gratuity as made him more certain than ever his late passenger had been engaged in some guilty mystery.

Old Mr. Davidson had known Colonel Fenton intimately. His son and Ronald had been schoolfellows. A letter had already prepared him for the change in the chaplain's fortune. He had, at Ronald's desire, been in communication with Mr. Griev's London agent with the result that a considerable balance already stood in the bank-books to the credit of the Rev. Ronald Fenton.

He listened with ready interest to the young man's story, looked with no little respect upon the box which contained the precious trust, and at once undertook its safe keeping; but he laughed at Ronald's fears of not discovering Will Trevlyn's heirs.

"My dear fellow," he said, quietly, "you are far more likely to be troubled with too many heirs than by the dearth of them. Remember the man has been dead five-and-twenty years, his children will be staid, married people, perhaps, with large families of their own. My belief is every one in any way connected with poor Will Trevlyn will be down on you!"

"I shall not publish what I want," said Ronald, gravely. "I know that Will Trevlyn left a widow and two young children; of course twenty-five years will have changed them; but then, you see, I have one east which can't fail. Dozens of people might prove their name to be Trevlyn, but they can't all have had a father who died at sea!"

Mr. Davidson shook his head.

"Depend upon it Mrs. Trevlyn will have published her own version of the story, she will have told her children—and perhaps her grandchildren—how her husband was bringing home an enormous fortune. The moment any one makes inquiries for Will Trevlyn's family she will guess the treasure has been found."

"Well, she can't accuse me of stealing it," said Ronald, quietly. "I was a boy of eight or nine when it happened. I daresay I seem to you to have undertaken a wild goose chase; but I passed my word to poor Griev, and I am not going to break it now."

"I don't want you to break it, only for your own sake and the interest of the real Trevilys be careful. I don't want you to be taken in, and unless you have altered in the last seven years any one could work on your feelings if they only made out a piteous story."

"I mean to be careful. I wish you would give me your advice."

"I should put the matter in the hands of a detective. You can afford to pay him liberally."

Ronald shook his head.

"It is my work, and I can't shirk it. What I meant was how ought I to set about it. Shall I advertise?"

"Your best plan would be to go to the shipping company. It is just possible they have kept the address to which they forwarded the poor fellow's effects."

"Have kept it for five-and-twenty years?"

"I repeat it is possible. If they keep an address book of their passengers it would take dozens of voyages to fill it, and once filled there is no telling but what they preserve the volume for reference."

"I'll go to-morrow," said Ronald, pocketing the banker's receipt for the chest, and getting up to go. "I am very much obliged to you for all the trouble I have given you."

"I only wish I could help you better," cried Mr. Davidson, "for I'm afraid you have a difficult task before you."

Do things ever happen by chance in this world? I think not. It was still early, and Ronald's will was good so go to the shipping office that very afternoon. It was a long way from the Strand, being in one of the crowded thoroughfares near Cornhill.

There was no cab to be seen, and he strolled on meaning to take the first he met, when he suddenly came face to face with an old school fellow whom he had not seen for years.

"Rushton! is it possible? I thought you were in India!"

"I've been there these ten years," returned the gentleman addressed, "am only just home again in fact. I think it is a wonderful effort of memory on your part to recognize me, for I am sure I am tremendously altered."

"Pretty fair," said the Chaplain, smiling; "but I always had a good memory for faces, and I am not likely to forget yours, if the Indian sun has browned your skin."

"It's done more than that," returned Mr. Rushton, pleasantly. "I feel copper-coloured, and I expect there are plenty of grey hairs on my head, you seem to have discovered the secret of perpetual youth Ronald, and yet, if I remember right, you are my senior."

"By a year I am three and thirty Rushton, and yet I can't manage to look a respectable age, you see hair won't grow on my face, and even seven years near the tropics don't seem to have darkened my complexion."

"You look three and twenty," replied Rushton, laughing, "but really Ronald we mustn't stand here discussing our reminiscences, or we shall be taken up for obstructing the public traffic. I am staying at a quiet hotel close by, and if you come and dine with me we can have a good talk over old times."

Mr. Fenton began to plead business but Digby Rushton interrupted him.

"I am going down to Hertfordshire to-morrow, and I don't know when I shall be up in town again; come along old fellow, I ordered dinner at five, it may seem a heathenish hour to you, but the fact is I have to speak at a meeting at Exeter Hall to-night."

"I did not know you were a public character!"

"I am not. I had a good deal of spare time in India, and as my most intimate friend was a missionary, I spent some of it in helping him, and the Society who sent him out, have asked me to give a few particulars of his work, that's all!"

Ronald Fenton's face flushed.

"I remember now how much you wished to be a clergyman."

"Aye, and my father insisted on my accept-

ing a government appointment instead, he said I could serve God as well as a layman, and that he could not refuse so good a chance with so many younger children. Poor father, he did not think then how busy death was to be amongst us, positively now Ronald I am the only son of my mother, and—she is a widow!"

They had reached the quiet family hotel now, and were in Mr. Rushton's private sitting room, so that Ronald could speak the sympathy he felt; he remembered the happy, cheerful, family circle, the seven bright boys, the affectionate parents, and he knew what the loss must be to Digby.

"I have been able to provide my mother with every comfort," said young Rushton, quietly, "and I try to be grateful, when I think of that, to my father's decision, but it seems hard I should have been denied the desire of my heart, since it appears likely now that I shall have only too much money."

"Have you discovered a gold mine?" asked his friend lightly.

"No, a little while ago I should have said I had no chance of ever possessing more than what I earn now, five hundred a year; but when I came back to England I found my mother had been in correspondence with the only kinsman we possess, my father's first cousin, they had rarely met, for he was near the head of the family while we were the youngest branch, but he writes to my mother, that he is getting old, and I am his heir."

"I know no one who would use prosperity better," said Ronald warmly, "and I think I have heard your father speak of this cousin as though he were very rich."

"He has a beautiful place in Herts and a handsome income. I am going down to Digby End to-morrow, to make acquaintance with the Squire and the old homestead where my grandfather was born."

"Digby End—I suppose you are called after the village?"

"Hardly that, the house itself is called Digby Place, my great grandmother was a Miss Digby, and she brought the estate to her husband John Rushton, it was entailed on their descendants; until lately I believed it could descend in the female line, but I suppose I am mistaken, since the present Squire has a daughter, although he speaks of me as his heir."

"Then he is married?"

"He has been a widower for two years; he has one daughter. He writes that he can provide for her handsomely as far as money is concerned, but that she will be terribly alone in the world, and he would like her to feel she has a friend in me."

"And she is your second cousin?"

"I should say third; but then I never was good at understanding relationships. Maude Digby, the heiress, who married John Rushton, had three sons, the eldest died childless, the second was the father of the present Squire, while I am the grandson of the youngest. I imagine Arline and myself are the last of the line."

"Has your mother ever seen her?"

"Never. Squire Rushton lived in great seclusion before his uncle's death. He was, comparatively speaking, very poor, he could not afford to mix with his equals, and he despised any other society. Some twenty-one years ago he took possession of Digby End with his wife. They had one daughter then, and still he wrote to my mother this year we believed she could inherit everything."

"And you are going to Digby End to-morrow? Is your mother to accompany you?"

"No; Hertfordshire would not suit her; Now we have talked enough about me, tell me something of yourself."

But poor Ronald already felt the constraint of his secret. He had resolved—and Mr. Davidson endorsed his decision—that it was safer not to reveal the object of his search to anyone; he could therefore only tell Digby

that he had six months' leave of absence, and his movements would probably be very uncertain.

"I came into rather a large legacy just as I was leaving Radian; it would make me independent of my chaplaincy if I liked to resign, and there is a great deal of business connected with my benefactor's will, so that the next few months are likely to be very busy ones."

"Well, you must let me have an address that will find you," said Digby, pleasantly, "for I don't mean to lose sight of you again. And now I suppose it is time for me to set out for Exeter Hall; you'd better come with me if you have no other engagement."

Ronald agreed. What use would it have been for him to go to the shipping office at half-past seven? His meeting with his friend had made a few hours' delay in his beginning his search, but after all what difference could a day's, or even a week's delay make in the atonement for a wrong that was a quarter of a century old?

(To be continued.)

DECIMA'S ORDEAL.

CHAPTER VI.—(continued.)

THE sweet, sad-eyed woman laid aside her sewing, and going to the side of her child knelt there, winding her arms about the girl's waist.

"Dearest," she said, gently, "what has changed you so during the last few months? You are not like yourself at all. Can you not trust your mother? I have not spoken to you of it, hoping against hope that you would come to me; but I have waited until I can wait no longer. The silence is wearing me out. Hour after hour I have lain awake at night, conscious of the suffering you were enduring so silently, and it has almost broken my heart that you would not let me share it. Decima, am I so little a part of your life that you cannot trust me with your grief?"

The anguish of the girl's eyes were staring.

She endeavoured to smile, but the effort was so palpable—so pitiable a failure that it brought tears to the eyes of the faithful mother.

You are distressing yourself about nothing, dearest," she answered, faintly. "You are seeing hobgoblins in the dusky shadows, that is all. You have been ill for so long that it has affected you with a certain kind of melancholia."

"Do you think you can deceive me like that? Do you think there is anything that you can conceal from your mother?" cried the unhappy woman, drawing back from her. "Ah! child, it is something worse than I at first thought when you will try so weak a deception as that. Decima, what is it?"

"Nothing!"

"And you think I will believe you? Do you think I have suffered so little in my life that I can mistake it in another? And most particularly when that other is more to me than—almost more than my soul? Oh, Decima, do you know how I love you? Have you ever considered how a mother adores her child?"

A hysterical sob rose to the girl's lips. With the greatest difficulty she choked it back, and laughed just a little wildly instead.

"Get up, dearest," she exclaimed, assisting her mother to a chair. "You are absolutely growing emotional, and all for nothing. Shall I tell you this great secret that you have been making such mountains of? Well, it is quite true that I have been afraid to tell you, and knowing how easily alarmed our dear friend, Miss Mortimer, is, I have rather avoided her as well, for fear she would upset you with her fears. I am not well—that is all. I have been feeling unwell all the autumn, and

perhaps I have not been quite like myself; but I did not think I had carried it so far as to make you think all the things you have. It is absolutely amusing. I have been too closely in doors. Sewing does not agree with me. You see, I have become a regular nomad. Now put all your fears aside, for when I have recovered from this billious attack I shall be as well as ever. Ha! ha! it is funny, is it not? All this emotion and breaking of hearts begins and ends in a billious attack. Curiously hard upon romance, is it not? Come, dear, let us talk of something more interesting than my prosaic health. What do you think I heard to day when I went to take Mrs. Denham's package home?"

"What?"

"Minnie has come home."

"Minnie Denham?"

"Yes."

"How dreadful!"

There was a momentary pause. The swift colour had surged into Decima's cheek; but Mrs. Bruce did not see it, bending as she did above a piece of sewing.

"Why dreadful?" the girl asked, at last, in a voice that was hollow and choked.

"Why? How can you ask? I wonder that she ever had the courage after the terrible thing that she had done."

Another pause, then in a tone still more dense, still more awful, if only the mother's ears had been open to hear it,—

"She had—loved."

"And—sinned!"

Again that frightful sob was rising in Decima's throat, but again she choked it back by a laugh so hard, so cold, that Mrs. Bruce shivered.

"It is horrible!" she said, dully. "Ah! dearest, we cannot understand love like that, can we? We come of a race too cold, too proud. Suppose—suppose—just to argue the case, you know—that you had ever loved—not wisely, but too well—and something—no matter what—had separated you from the man who had caused your shame, what would you have done?"

"Drowned myself!" answered the woman.

"What?"

"Drowned myself! Do you think that there is anything in all this world that should tempt a chaste woman to bring that degradation upon herself? Do you think there is anything under Heaven's that would excuse her for bringing a shame like that upon her family? If Minnie Denham had been a child of mine I would gladly have given her to the waves rather than have the disgrace upon her that must ever attach to a wifeless mother!"

For a moment a wild agony burned in Decima's eyes. It seemed that concealment of her hideous suffering was no longer possible; then she fell back in her chair, pale, almost exhausted under the strength of her own anguish. It was frightful! She lifted her sad eyes pleadingly to her mother's face: she opened her lips to speak, but the words died upon them. She wrung her hands helplessly. There was nothing that she could say—nothing—nothing!

"Now this is completed," exclaimed Mrs. Bruce, in her most business like tone, "I am going to send you with it at once. The walk will do you good. Put on your hat while I put up the parcel."

With a step that staggered, Decima rose to obey.

There was an anguish at her heart that cut like a knife. She knew that her time had come—she knew that her day of grace was over.

She fastened on her hat, and turned to watch the pale woman's swift fingers as she tied the cord about the package. She knew that she was about to say to her an eternal farewell, and perhaps that knowledge was the bitterest one that had as yet come into her suffering life. Still there was not a tear in her eye.

"There it is!" exclaimed Mrs. Bruce, brightly. "Now take it, and be sure you go to call upon Miss Mortimer before you return. You will do it, Decima?"

"Yes," she answered, in a tone that her mother remembered long afterward; I will call there before I return!"

She took the bundle, then, laying it upon the table placed her arms about her mother.

"Good-bye, dearest," she said, hoarsely, the dry tearless grasp touching Mrs. Bruce with quivering force—"good-bye, dearest! Have I pained you of late, I was a good daughter to you once, was I not?"

"Decima, what are you saying?"

"I should like to hear you say it, dearest. It will be a comfort to me. I was a good daughter to you once, was I not?"

"You have always been a good daughter to me, my darling."

"Thank you for that so much—so much! Put your arms about my neck in the old fond way and kiss me, will you not? There is one thing about us, dearest, that never can die, and that is memory. I remember how you used to take me upon your knee and tell me how great a part a little child formed in its mother's life. You would never believe that there could come a time in your life when—But what am I saying? Kiss me, mother, as you kissed me then, and let me go."

"How strangely you act, Decima."

"Don't think of it, I am ill and tired. Kiss me, dearest, and say 'Heaven bless you,' as you did in those old days that are dead beyond resurrection."

"Heaven bless you, my precious girl!"

And then the sob would be no longer repressed. It struggled up and rent the air, so filled with agony that Mrs. Bruce cried out; but when she looked there was a smile upon her daughter's face.

"Thank you, dearest!" she whispered.

There was one long kiss, and then, without a backward glance, Decima was gone—gone! Only Heaven knows the pity of it all!

And there was no word spoken to call her back!

CHAPTER VII.

A SWIFT, wind-swept snow was beginning to fall that out the face like a whip-lash. The wind whistled about the exposed corners of adjacent buildings, sometimes wildly, at other times dimly, like a human thing in distress. A terrible storm was breaking, and to it Mrs. Bruce listened in dismay.

More than once she went to the window and, lifting it, looked down into the dark street where the few pedestrians were hurrying and scurrying in anxiety to reach the shelter of home, however poor a one it might be; but a great height made her dizzy, and the wind caught until she drew back with an irrepressible shudder.

She glanced at the tiny clock upon the little mantel shelf.

"Nine o'clock!" she said, aloud, shivering as her voice broke the intense silence of the room. "Nine o'clock, and Decima gone since five! What can it mean? I might think she had remained with Miss Mortimer, but they would have sent me a message surely, knowing how great my anxiety would be. Hark!"

She listened intently, but the light footfall that had attracted her attention passed the door and turned down the hall.

She sighed wearily, and sinking down in a chair allowed a slow tear to trickle down her pallid cheek.

She seemed to lose herself in a bitter reverie for some time, during which the storm increased in violence. The flakes of snow and ice were hurled against the window-panes with the fury of a hurricane, and a gust of peculiar violence seemed to shake the house to its very foundation.

Mrs. Bruce started up, clasping her hands in an agony of terror.

"Ten o'clock!" she cried, wildly, "and

Decima still not here—still no message from her! I can bear it no longer. What shall I do? I will go to Miss Mortimer. If she is not there—"

The poor woman seemed incapable of completing the thought. Her pale lips were set in a rigid line, her haggard eyes contained a desperation that was utterly foreign to their usual placidity.

For a moment she paused to listen to the wild raging of the storm, then seeming to realize without the power of deduction that either bonnet or umbrella would be worse than useless, she wound a shawl about her head and shoulders and hurried down the long flight of stairs to the street.

A great gust of wind and sleet tore at her face like the claws of some fierce animal; but if she felt it she paid no heed.

The streets were deserted save for an occasional cab which staggered through the storm; yet that hideous presentiment of impending evil to her darling lent strength to the weary, flagging steps of the wretched woman.

She turned into a cross street, the wind and sleet seeming to gain new ascendancy. More than once she fell prostrate upon her face; but with difficulty she scrambled to her feet again and tottered on. The snow, freezing as it fell and swept by the wind, still cut her cruelly. Occasionally she was forced to clutch at an iron railing to prevent herself from falling, her fingers torn and bleeding as they left their cold support.

Not once, under all the difficulties by which she was surrounded, was she tempted to turn back. Her heart seemed so cold and sick under the awful fear that oppressed her that she thought of nothing but to reach the home of her one friend. She dared not analyze her own fears, but with bent head and tottering steps she staggered on.

She reached a main street at last, faint, almost exhausted, and supported herself by one of the street lamps until an omnibus drawn by lagged and jaded horses came up. She hailed it and got in.

There were few passengers, but those that were within she scarcely saw. Her ghastly face may have attracted them, but she was only one more of those poor unfortunates whom we pass daily—almost hourly—in our wanderings, so common that we even forget to pity.

Her wild eyes were fixed ever upon the street, a shiver passing over her occasionally as a renewed burst of wind spoke of the increase of the storm. Then at last she signalled to the conductor and left the vehicle.

The wind carried her almost off her feet; but she drew her shawl more closely and went onward.

Only a little way now. The lights from the houses flickered into the streets, an occasional note of music was heard above the voice of the storm; but Mrs. Bruce was deaf to sound. Once or twice she paused and peered through the shadowy light at the numbers upon the houses, then going onward as rapidly as the storm and her own weariness would permit, she counted the houses.

"It is here," she moaned at last. "Heaven grant that I may find her safe!"

She paused for a moment as if her frail strength had deserted her, then by a supreme effort, beaten back as she was at every step by the fierceness of the storm, she mounted the steps and pulled violently at the bell.

Protected somewhat from the storm, she leaned against the inner door, fighting back the faintness that she felt overwhelming her. Then she became conscious that a stream of light from the hall had fallen over her. By a supreme effort she drew herself up and turned to the servant: but everything grew dark before her. She staggered, and, throwing out her hand, caught the man's arm.

"Miss Mortimer," she gasped. "Quick! I must see her!"

Acquainted as he was with the numerous charities of his mistress, the man did not

hesitate, but drew the dripping creature inside the hall.

"Wait here," he said to her, "and I will speak to Miss Mortimer."

But Mrs. Bruce had already stood all that her frail constitution could endure. Blindly she groped her way after him, and as he lifted the *portiere* of the drawing room she pushed by him.

As one recognises a shadow, she saw Alice Mortimer rise and come towards her.

"Where is she?" gasped the miserable mother, already conscious of how little hope she had had from the beginning. "Is Decima here?"

"Decima."

"Yes. For Heaven's sake, speak quick!"

"She is not here—has not been here. Oh, Mrs. Bruce, what has happened?"

But there was no answer. The white-faced figure swayed for a moment, then fell headlong into the arms of the young man who was Alice Mortimer's guest.

He was scarcely less pale than she. With set lips and a wild burning in the eyes which spoke more plainly than words of his great anxiety, he lifted the frail form in his arms, all wet and dripping as she was, and carried her to a sofa in the library. He lowered her head, and while Alice watched in silent surprise, he restored his patient to consciousness.

When the great blue eyes opened once again Miss Bruce caught his arm.

"Thomas will carry her to my room, Graham," she exclaimed, "and my maid will—"

But Graham Clinton shook his head.

"Wait!" he said, in a tone she had never heard him use before. "We must know first what has brought her here at this hour and upon a night like this."

Already Mrs. Bruce had struggled to a sitting posture, and was gazing from one to the other in wild dismay. Very gently Clinton took her hands in his, and controlling his own emotion as best he could, said almost tenderly,—

"Try to calm yourself, madame, and tell us what has happened. Remember that you are with friends who will go to any length to assist you. It is of Miss Decima Bruce that you were speaking, is it not?"

"Yes, yes," she answered, hoarsely, "my daughter. She left me at five o'clock to return a piece of work. She said that she would call here before her return. At ten she had not come."

Graham Clinton's face grew still more grave.

"Perhaps—" he began, but she interrupted him.

"It may seem foolish to be so frightened," she cried, miserably, "but her manner at leaving me was so strange, so very strange. Oh, why, did I not think then and keep with her me?"

"Calm yourself, dear madame," exclaimed Clinton, with great difficulty, maintaining his own self-control. "Remember your own daughter's fate may depend upon it. Tell me as nearly as you can all that occurred. Keep back nothing, for upon a small detail everything may depend."

And then followed a minute account of that afternoon. A spasm of pain had settled upon Clinton's features. He appeared grey and old, but not a word escaped his lips as that wretched mother repeated the last sentence that she had heard fall from her daughter's lips—a sentence that was engraved upon her heart forever.

"Kiss me, dearest, and say 'Heaven bless you,' as you did in those old days that are dead beyond resurrection."

And then Mrs. Bruce described that sob that had filled even the air with agony.

"What did you say was the number of the house where she went to return the sewing?" asked Clinton so hoarsely that neither of them would have recognised his voice.

It was given.

"Remain here until my return," he cried, unable to repress some slight expression of his absorbing anguish. "When I return I will bring news of her. You can do nothing. Leave everything to me, and I will find her as surely as Heaven is above us."

He strode from the room without a glance in the direction of his *fiancée*, forgetful even of her existence, unconscious that she stood beside him as he paused upon the step to button his great coat about him before plunging into the storm.

CHAPTER VIII.

WITH HAT drawn down closely over his eyes and coat buttoned about his throat, Graham Clinton faced the fiercest storm that London had known for years.

Yet he scarcely seemed to feel it. The gale that would have made progress almost impossible for another seemed to comfort his raging spirit. The cutting of the wind across his face, strange as it may seem, was almost refreshing. He was well-nigh crazed under his awful anxiety for the girl whom he loved better than he did his life, and but for his fear for her safety, the storm would have been a positive relief to his suffering.

He strode on with bent head, unconscious of the tremendous effort he was making to keep his feet, blinded by the sleet and snow that blew in gusts into his eyes, yet walking with comparative rapidity, led by intuition rather than any connected reason. He seemed stunned by the fear that paralysed his heart.

There was not a cab to be seen, and no line of omnibuses that led to the address that Mrs. Bruce had given; but the distance was not great, and it was with something like a revival of hope that he paused before the house that she had indicated, to make sure of the number, then staggered up the steps and rang the bell.

It was then for the first time that he realised that he was almost frozen. His stiff fingers nearly refused when called upon to fasten themselves about the bell-handle, his moustache was frozen in a straight icicle across his mouth, and when the flood of light from the hall fell upon him as the door was opened by the servant, he could scarcely control his tongue sufficiently to ask his question: "Is Mrs. Gray at home?"

The servant stared in some surprise that anyone should call at that hour and in a storm so violent, but seeing that it was a gentleman who had addressed her, she answered,—

"Yes, sir, I think so. Will you walk in?"

Grateful for the warmth that was offered, and scarcely able to control his anxiety, he stepped inside, allowed the girl to close the door, then stationed himself near the stove in the hall.

"I will wait here," he said, to the maid, "I am too wet to go into the drawing-room. Say to Mrs. Gray that I will not detain her a moment."

The girl departed upon her errand, and shortly after a lady descended the stairs. Clinton had somewhat recovered from the terrible chill, and with hat in hand went forward to meet her.

"I must apologise for intruding upon you at this hour, Mrs. Gray," he said, in his accustomed high-bred way that no one ever by any chance mistook; "but I am very anxious about a young lady who is thought to have come to your house upon an errand this afternoon, and who has not as yet returned home. I refer to Miss Bruce. Is she here?"

"Miss Bruce? Oh, no! She was here a little after five o'clock and left before the storm began. She certainly had ample time to have reached home long before it began to snow."

A faintness seized upon Clinton. He staggered against the wall, his face ghastly in

its set pallor. For a moment it seemed that he had utterly lost control of himself. Mrs. Gray turned hurriedly to her servant.

"Tell Thomas to bring some brandy at once, and get a chair for this gentleman," she exclaimed.

Clinton received the chair gratefully, in a measure recovering himself, and smiled at Mrs. Gray in a way that touched her heart. "I am sorry to trouble you," he said, as quietly as he could force his shaking voice to speak; "but my fear for Miss Bruce almost overcame me for the moment. I have quite recovered from the weakness now. I can't describe the storm to you. It is frightful, and she has not reached home. Will you tell me what you can of her call here?"

"There seems to be so little to tell," answered the lady, hesitatingly; yet now that you recall it all to me, I remember that there was something most peculiar in Miss Bruce's manner. She refused to receive the money that was due her mother for the work that she had done, but begged me to send it to her to-morrow morning. I recall that there was a most peculiar expression upon her face when she made the request, but naturally, not being particularly well acquainted with her, I asked no questions. And now that you have brought it to my memory with your interrogation, there was one other point that attracted my attention. The nurse was coming in with baby at the time that Miss Bruce was leaving. She took the child from nurse's arms, kissed her passionately, laid her back, and hurried from the room."

But the latter remembrance seemed not to affect Clinton as the former had done. He knew perfectly well that the Bruces were not in such affluent circumstances that they could refuse to receive money that was rightly their due, and the fact struck him with peculiar significance.

He took the glass of brandy that the servant had brought, and swallowed it as if the fiery liquid had been water; then he arose. He did not care to communicate his fears to this woman; but in a voice that was unrecognisably hoarse, he asked,—

"Is that all?"

"I think so."

"She said nothing about where she was going from here?"

"Nothing."

"I thank you very much for your kindness, and wish you good-evening."

"You are quite welcome to the little I have been able to tell you; but I should like for you to let me know when Miss Bruce is safe. There is something in the extraordinary beauty of the child that seems to attract every one to her, and I shall feel anxious until I know that she is with her friends again."

Some irrepressible impulse caused Graham Clinton to put out his hand and grasp that of the woman beside him. He felt her sympathy for the girl he loved in the tone of her kind voice, and it touched him deeply.

"Thank you," he said, simply. "I shall do so."

And then Mrs. Gray held the door open for him until he had once more faced the storm, but now without that hope that had buoyed him up during the walk there.

His heart was torn with all kinds of fears. What has happened to Decima? Why had she left her home in that strange way? What had caused the significant conversation with her mother?

And then the horrible fear came over him that she had killed herself. He turned giddy and held to the railing for support; but he put the thought from him with a savage force that seemed to impart strength. He recovered himself and went doggedly on.

The storm was still in the fiercest of its struggle, but he pressed on with a resolution that would have carried him through a greater difficulty.

He went to the nearest police-station and had the alarm sent out; then he realised, with

a sinking of the heart, that he had done all he could do.

Yet how was he to face that wretched mother again, believing as he did that he was the cause of her daughter's strange disappearance, and with nothing to tell her but that her worst fears were realised—that there was nothing to tell, that Decima's fate was as much in darkness as ever?

He groaned audibly. His own heart seemed breaking under the greatness of his grief, yet his first thought was of that miserable mother whom he had worse than robbed of more than her life. How he cursed himself and his own mad folly that had plunged them all in that bitter misery! Yet it was too late to recall it. The act was in that dead past that even the power of a Heaven can not erase.

If he could have died out there in the storm rather than go back and face those two women, both of whom he had so cruelly wronged, it would have been a happier fate; but there was little cowardice in his nature. He returned to them, and he went as quickly as the storm would allow.

But it was a terrible struggle. Chilled as he already was to the very marrow of his bones, weary and heart-sore, faint from the sickening fear upon him, thinking at every step how impossible it was for a frail thing like Decima to live through such a storm, the walk was a terrible one.

Having arrived at the house, he pulled the bell feebly, but not so feebly that it was heard by the two anxious women within.

Miss Mortimer herself it was who answered the summons. She seized him by the arm and almost dragged him into the house. Neither seemed capable of putting the question that was spoken by both of anxious, suffering eyes; but Clinton did not even see his *fiancée*. He was looking at the mother of the girl whom he had so madly loved, thinking of the terrible blow that he must inflict. He pushed Alice from him without a glance in her direction, and going to Mrs. Bruce, he took both her hands in his.

"You must not despair," he said hoarsely, trying to infuse his voice with a courage he was far from feeling, and failing pitiously. "I have not found her, but I swear to you that, if your child is still upon this earth, she shall be restored to you! Try to trust me, if you can, as you would trust your own son."

But the last words were uttered to deaf ears, for Mrs. Bruce was lying silently upon the floor, with upturned, unconscious face.

There was an expression of bewilderment and horror upon Miss Mortimer's face that was not translatable; but Graham was blind to all that. She watched him, half-stunned, as for the second time he lifted the still body in his stiff, numb arms.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN Decima left the residence of Mrs. Gray she paused at the foot of the step, half bewildered under the uncertainty and terror that were upon her.

The act of leaving home was no suddenly conceived notion with her. She had known for some time that it must be done sooner or later to save herself from the shame that she had brought upon herself and her mother; but, like all women, she had hoped against hope for that interposition of Providence that never comes. But it was almost with the suddenness of a blow that she realised that the time had come when her departure could be in safety postponed no longer.

Yet as much as she had thought of the subject in the silence and darkness of her own chamber, she had arrived at no conclusion as to what she should do.

She must go away. That seemed to be the only definite idea that she possessed, and it had so completely prostrated her mentally that she had been able to think out no plan by which she could aid herself.

"What am I to do?" she asked of herself, helplessly, as she stood there under the threatening sky. "Shall I take her advice and drown my misery and my shame together? Heaven help me, I cannot—I cannot! I have not the right. If it were but my worthless life alone—but, no; it cannot be! I must live for the sake of—Thou, God, who had pity upon the Magdalene, have mercy upon me!"

She turned away aimlessly and walked onward with bent head, unconscious of the direction she was taking, too much stunned by the awfulness of her position to be able to think or plan even remotely for her future.

The storm had not broken, but the wind was blowing heavily—a fierce, biting gale that cut her like a knife—but she did not pause to consider it. She was leaving for ever everything that life had ever held dear to her—her mother, her friend, her lover! There was nothing left—nothing! Death would have been so easy to her, and yet she dared not consider that.

She was in the teeth of a hideous agony, driven by the most cruel fate that ever scourged an innocent and helpless girl.

And after all, the fault was not hers, but an error of that great mastering passion, Love, that is Heaven given.

She was too wearily miserable to consider the horrible uncertainty, the frightful dangers of the unknown life into which she was going; but with semi-unconsciousness she went onward. She was recalled to a knowledge of her surroundings by the bustle and confusion around her—the crossing of street-cars, the hurrying of men and women—and looking about her for the first time, she realised that she was in front of Euston Station.

She paused and tried to collect her wits. She had saved a little money from the pittance she had been enabled to earn, knowing that this day was at hand; and almost without taking time for a second of reflection, she followed the people who were entering the station.

There was a girl just in front of her—a girl about her own age and size—a girl that was not unlike her as to her back and hair—and as she followed, a desire to see the face of this traveller, who was also alone, possessed her. She quickened her steps. The face was not pretty, but there was an expression of such sorrow in it that Decima felt herself instinctively drawn to the stranger. She walked directly behind her to the window of the booking-office.

In a soft voice that spoke of considerable refinement, the stranger asked for a ticket for Birmingham and, following her example, opened her well-worn purse and repeated the request. The girl turned and glanced at her fellow-traveller. The same magnetism that had attracted Decima seemed to reach her, for as she met the girl's eye a smile passed over her plain, pale face.

Decima smiled in return. Is it singular that suffering recognises its companion? There were stranger fatalities in this curious old world of ours.

Mary Grant stopped when she had passed the booking-office, and waited until Decima had received her change.

"Are you going to Birmingham?" she asked, quietly.

"Yes."

"Are you alone?"

"Yes."

"Shall we not go together, then? Travelling alone is not nearly so pleasant as when one has an agreeable companion."

"Perhaps I shall not prove very agreeable, in so far as being entertaining goes, but I shall be very glad of your society," answered Decima, thankful that something was to interrupt the misery of her own reflections.

The two walked on together and took their seats in the train.

"Do you live in Birmingham?" asked Miss Grant, with a smile that was most winning.

"No; I have never been there in my life. Do you know the place?"

"Not at all. The fact is that I am sadly afraid I am going upon a fool's errand. My mother died three years ago, leaving me all alone in the world. She had one sister, whose address she did not know; but they had loved each other very dearly in their girlhood, and my mother made me promise that if ever I heard of her I would go to see her, and, if welcome, remain under her care. I heard last week that she was living in Birmingham though I am as yet uncertain of the address. The consequence is that I have not written, but am going there hoping that I may find her. It is a terrible struggle for a girl to live in this world alone."

Decima shivered.

"It must be," she said, drearily.

"Are you going to friends," asked the girl, kindly.

"No; I have none. I am going to make my own way in the world."

Miss Grant looked at her sharply; but seeing the whitened pain and misery in the young face, she swallowed the words that were upon her lips, and said instead,—

"You are very pretty, cruelly pretty. It will be worse for you than it has been for me. Heaven pity you!"

There was a long silence between them, during which each seemed busy with her own most painful reflections. The train was running swiftly. The darkness has come suddenly, and the wind was whistling with peculiar fierceness. The storm was coming, and many persons, with their hands shading their eyes, peered into the darkness without through the windows, shivering as they realised the strength of the hurricane.

Then great flakes of snow spattered against the glass—snow that froze tightly as it fell.

"It is a wild night without!" a hoarse voice at the end of the carriage said aloud. "I don't remember in seeing a night like this for twenty years."

There was silence again, and the people shuddered.

Still the train moved rapidly, the shrill scream of the locomotive, heard occasionally above the voice of the wind, sounding like some human thing gasping for help. The passengers huddled together, as if some premonition of impending danger hung over them and there was hope of courage in their proximity to each other.

"It is frightful!" whispered Decima to her new friend, drawing a trifle closer to her.

"Are not you afraid?"

Miss Grant laughed softly.

"No!" she answered. "There is something grand to me in a superb storm like this. I am a fatalist, or perhaps I should say, a believer in predestination. God knows best, and I am willing to leave my life in His hands. No; I am not afraid."

The quietness of the tone seemed to calm Decima, for she sat for some moments forgetful of her own suffering in listening to the wildness of the wind as it swept madly about the car.

"It is cold, don't you think?" asked Miss Grant, after another long pause.

"Rather."

"I am afraid of an accident—"

"Nonsense! Why should there be one to-night more than any other night?"

"I don't know, but—"

"You are nervous. Don't be foolish."

"I am afraid I can't help it."

The train had slowed up for some reason, and almost every face of the carriage was shaded as the passengers peered from the windows.

"Looks like a bridge," said some one as Decima looked out.

Miss Grant had changed her seat and had taken the one next the window, making room for Decima beside her. There was a sudden lurch of the car that threw her backward before she had reached it. She caught upon one of the seats and saved herself from falling, but before she could recover her balance there was a fierce howl of the wind more terrible

than all the rest. For a moment the moving train seemed to quiver, then,—Heaven knows what happened.

There was a wild shriek from a hundred throats—and silence.

CHAPTER X.

COMPUTED in minutes, perhaps that hideous silence continued scarcely two, but to those miserable beings, paralysed with fright, lying there stricken, wounded, dying in the debris, it seemed ages; but it is curious how quickly the human mind will recover from a shock, no matter how stunning in its effect.

It was from a bridge that crossed a deep valley that the train had been blown, and there at the bottom the carriages were smashed in pieces, some lying across each other, others stretched out stark and stiff like huge dead animals, but all telling their own story of death and destruction.

As soon as they had realised what had happened, those who had escaped unhurt began to pull themselves from the broken timbers that had fallen upon and pionioned them. Then began the groans and curses from the men, shrieks from the women, and piteous cries from children that makes a scene like that give a man such as Dante a conception of Inferno.

But for all their oaths and blasphemy, the men worked like Trojans. Twenty had, perhaps made their escape from the ruins and were engaged in the charitable work of assisting others, when suddenly there was a cry of horror from every lip, and for a single second the hands that answered the will of sympathetic hearts were stopped under the wild fear that took possession of them.

"Fire! The carriages are on fire!"

It was but too true. The overturned engine had done its deadly work, and the flames, fanned to fury by the terrible gale, leaped higher and higher, licking about in every direction in search of fresh fuel for its hideous work.

The red glare and crackling of the fires, the fierce roar of the wind, the groans and cries of the doomed wretches, completed a scene that could only be surpassed in horror by the very centre of Hades.

But the terrors of the situation only seemed to lend new strength to that noble little band of rescuers, and they worked with the energy born of despair. A few more workers were added to their number, men who had been released from some object which had held them prisoners, and, forgetful of their own cuts and bruises, they toiled at heavy objects that confined their fellow-sufferers, their faces blackened with smoke, their willing hands blistered with the flames; but still they paused not.

How readily we can understand, under circumstances like these, that noble, generous man was created in the likeness of Heaven.

Person after person was taken from the burning wreck and laid upon the ground under the pouring sleet and snow. There was no time to ascertain whether they were living or dead, for there were others to be saved. Overcoats were thrown over the women until the supply was exhausted, and the others were forced to take their chances with the unconscious men.

It was a night to be remembered through all ages.

It is singular with what wonderful rapidity bad news flies, sometimes apparently without any means of transportation whatever. No one knew how they heard the news, but very soon lanterns were seen to flicker through the pitchy darkness. There was hasty orders given by the recruits, and the work went on with renewed energy.

But there was no time to be lost. The flames were gaining! But a few more bodies, dead or alive, could be rescued, and then the effort must be abandoned.

A noble man with eyebrows and lashes burned from his face was making a heroic endeavour to extricate a body from under one of the burning seats that held it firmly. His hands were blistered, but he would not yield to pain, and with an effort born of fury he tore the broken seat aside and lifted the small form in his arms.

"Poor child!" he muttered. "I did my best, but it is too late. I wonder what mother will weep for her!"

He laid her tenderly upon the ground and turned to survey the scene.

There was nothing more that could be done. Human aid was powerless.

The dark, motionless figures of the men stood there for a moment surveying the ruins under the still glaring light of the fire, then wearily turned to their self-imposed charges.

"What are we to do with these people?" some one asked, in stentorian tones, the uncanny sound of the voice making every one shiver. "Is there anyone who knows the country?"

"My house is just up the hill," answered a man whose face no one could see. "It is large, and at the service of the people, if we can manage to get them there."

But there was no question of "if" with those great-hearted men. They set to heart with a will to improvise stretchers, and some with them, others carrying their heavy burdens in their arms, they followed the faint flicker of a lantern, and staggered up the hill to the handsome house at the top.

The doors were thrown open, and with surprising rapidity the house was converted into a temporary hospital as well as a morgue.

The beds were utilised for those who were most hurt until the supply was exhausted, the dead were placed upon chairs or upon the floor, and the wreck in the hollow left to itself until the light of morning would allow the men to finish the work for the dead.

The women of the household, as well as those who had escaped comparatively unhurt from the accident, worked with a will under the direction of three physicians who were in the train, and what service human aid could give was rendered to those suffering beings.

One of the ladies of the house bent with a physician over a tiny, childish body that lay upon a couch.

"Do you think she is dead, doctor?" she asked, glancing into his anxious, puzzled face.

"No," he answered; "she is not dead, but it is impossible to tell just yet how badly hurt she is."

"I am glad she is not dead, at all events. She is so beautiful! It would be a terrible blow to her mother."

"And to her husband, perhaps."

"Her husband?"

"Yes; she is married, I think. Will you examine her while I am waiting upon the others, and see if there is anything by which she can be identified?"

As Mrs. Allen bent over the white face upon the sofa pillow she fancied she saw a crimson glow in the cheeks. A moment later she was convinced that she was not mistaken, for the great eyes were opened and fixed upon her.

There was a minute of bewilderment, then the little figure sat up.

"I remember now," she said, piteously, passing her hand across her eyes. "It was an accident to the train, was it not?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Allen, tenderly. "Are you much hurt? What seems to be the matter with you?"

"Nothing, I am dazed, that is all. Was any one hurt?"

"It was frightful! But you must not ask me any questions now. Lie down. You are very weak and white, and may not be so well as you think. To-morrow you shall know everything that I can tell you."

"But there is no reason why I should not know now. I am not hurt."

"There are numbers killed outright. You are very fortunate to have escaped with your life. But now will you not tell me your name and where we can telegraph to your friends? You know the news of the disaster will be in the papers to-morrow, and your family will be anxious concerning you unless they know that you are quite safe."

A crimson glow again covered the girl's face.

"There is no one to whom you could telegraph," she answered, huskily.

"Not your husband?"

There was a momentary hesitation upon the part of the girl, then with downcast eyes she answered, faintly.

"He is dead."

"Poor child—poor little helpless thing! You are very young for that."

The sad eyes that were lifted to the woman's face filled with tears. There was an instant of hesitation, then Mrs. Allen leaned over and kissed the sweet, childish lips.

The girl arose immediately.

"You see I am quite recovered," she said, hurriedly. "If there are others hurt, let me help you with them."

And knowing that there were so few to do what was required to be done, Mrs. Allen consented.

Together the two left the room and entered the great drawing-room, which for the time had been converted in a dead house.

Near the door, upon two chairs, lay a girl, part of her hair streaming across her face, which was burned until absolutely unrecognizable. Her clothes had been burned from the poor blistered body, which was protected by a sheet thrown across it.

As Mrs. Allen with her companion entered the room, a few persons were standing beside the corpse, one man with a pencil and paper in his hand, evidently the reporter for a paper.

Some one said in an undertone, as the two ladies entered.

"That young lady can identify her. They were travelling together."

The young man turned.

For a moment the room swam before the eyes of the girl. She knew that a question was being put to her, but a giddiness that was almost unconsciousness overcame her, and she staggered against the door. She had realized in an instant what had happened, and as the question was asked her resolution was taken.

"Can you tell us who this lady is?"

"Yes," she answered, faintly. "Her name is Decima Bruce. She is from London."

CHAPTER XI.

THE audacity of her own falsehood left Decima weak and trembling, leaning against the wall for the support that her limbs refused her.

She had given that dead girl her name—that poor creature of whose identity she was entirely unaware, knowing that her friends would accept the statement as correct, knowing that there was scarcely a chance that she should be detected in the fraud, for the face was burned beyond recognition, while not an atom of her original clothing remained upon the poor charred body. There was the hair left, to be sure, and the stature remained the same; but she had before remarked how nearly like her own they were. She knew, therefore, that in so far as her mother and those others whom she had left behind were concerned, she would be as dead when that lifeless body was sent them as if it were in reality Decima Bruce's, who would lie in the grave that they would prepare.

She was not slow to recognize the deliverance that God had sent, and while she deplored the necessity of falsehood, she thanked Him for sending her a way to save herself a greater sin.

"Can you give me her address?" asked the reporter, kindly.

It was given in faint, trembling tones; then someone noticed how white she had grown under the emotion that had overtaken her. An arm was thrown about her and she was led from the room.

It was not until she was placed upon the same sofa in the library upon which she had returned to consciousness that Decima raised her eyes to the face of her companion; but naturally given to thinking quickly, she had already reviewed the situation with singular clearness.

The woman beside her was beyond the prime, but the silver hair framed a countenance of peculiar beauty, if of peculiar firmness. There was not a weak line in the aristocratic old face, unless tenderness and gentleness could be classed as weakness. There was an expression of pride in the well-out lips that impressed Decima even in her nervous condition, but instinctively she felt that she could trust the lady who held her hands so kindly.

"The little girl in the other room is your sister, is she not?" the woman asked.

"No, madame," answered Decima, endeavouring to speak distinctly, though her voice trembled piteously. "We were no relation whatever."

"You were close friends, then?"

"Not even that. I never saw her until yesterday. We were travelling together because we were going to the same place to try to make our way in the world. It was a venture with both of us, therefore we were somewhat confidential."

"You are going to fill some position, then?"

"I am going to try. I am afraid I am very ignorant for anything of that sort; but it seems to me that there should always be something for willing hands to do."

"There is no definite position, then?"

"Oh, no. I am going to try to get work, that is all."

"But you are very young to be alone in the world and dependent upon yourself."

A wan smile made Decima's face extremely beautiful.

"I am not so young as I look. My youthful appearance has always been against me."

"Not so much as your beauty will be in the life to which you are going. What can you do?"

"Very little, I am afraid."

"You must pardon me for questioning you so closely, but there may be something that I can do to assist you, and in that event I should be very glad. I was in the same train with you last night, though I don't believe we were in the same carriage, and it seems to me that it is a duty I owe to Heaven for having allowed me to escape that I should do something for one of His creatures in return."

"Heaven has been doubly good to me in that He spared my life and sent me you. I cannot sufficiently thank you, madame."

"Don't try yet, as I have done nothing for which to be thanked; but let us go over a list of your accomplishments—sort of schedule, so to speak," said the lady, with a peculiarly winning smile. "You say you must make your own living. Now what can you do?"

A puzzled expression crossed Decima's face. "I am very ignorant," she said, helplessly. "Let me see—I can sew fairly well, and—"

She paused and glanced into the woman's face appealingly.

"Can you read aloud well?"

"Tolerably well."

"Can you sing?"

"I can sing, but cannot play. We have always been poor, and my voice is not cultivated, save in so far as my father was able to teach me, and that was very little."

(To be continued).

KIT.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

So the weeks had sped away, Christmas was a thing of the past, spring had adorned the world with a garment of freshness and fragrance, Maurice Montgomery was out at his post in the far east; his young wife was bearing bravely her separation from the one being who was her world; and preparing for the trial which heralds the joys of maternity with all the sweetness and courage of her nature, Constance Marlowe was about to become Constance Greaves; Chris Hornton had progressed so far in his legal career as to be studiously eating his dinners, and Philip Desmond had already won honour and fame by a magnificent maiden speech in the House.

Universal regret was expressed in society at the fact that young Lady Desmond, whose beauty and charm had already become the theme of admiration, should have been prevented from taking her proper place in the world of fashion and rank during the London season.

She had, it is true, made her appearance as became her position at one of the March Drawing-rooms, being presented at the same time as Sybil, who had to make a fresh *entrée* in her new guise as a married woman, but after this function was over, Kit had retired again to Courtfield, and was lost to sight.

The reason for her absence from town was forthcoming in the ill health of old Lady Milborough, who had been attacked with severe bronchitis during her visit to Sir Philip and his wife, had developed such serious symptoms as to be unable to be moved either to her town or country house, and whose age and delicate constitution made her condition one of great anxiety to her friends and relations.

The affection that had existed for so long between Philip Desmond and this kinewoman was something that every one knew, therefore it was by no means an astonishing piece of news that the old lady's state of health was occasioning the new member for —, in the City of London, much trouble; but the world of fashion was unanimous in declaring that Lady Desmond evinced a more than generous and unselfish nature in renouncing the pleasures and triumphs of a season for the sickroom, and devoting herself night and day to one who, though so dear a friend to her husband, was, after all, little more than a stranger to herself.

And then, too, it was decreed almost a sad thing that so devoted a couple should be compelled to pass the beginning of their newly-married life, comparatively speaking, apart, for with the immense amount of business surrounding his election and seat in the House, Sir Philip was of course obliged to be perpetually on the spot, necessitating a lonely domestic sojourn in chambers, while his big town house wore a muffled and silent air, and his beautiful young wife was residing at Courtfield, which was at too great a distance from town to allow of Sir Philip travelling to it more frequently than once every week.

Constance Marlowe alone, out of all the world (Chris excepted) was not deceived by the apparently easy construction given to the Desmond ménage.

She knew as clearly as if the whole truth had been written or spoken to her what an anguish of misery lay beneath Philip Desmond's calm, quiet bearing.

When comment passed on his tired, harassed appearance, she knew how much was due to affairs of state, and how much to the remembrance of a sorrow that began at Christmas time, and would last him all his life.

All this was most agreeable to Constance. The colour would flash into her cheeks and eyes when she realised just what these two

were suffering—the girl whom she detested with such jealous hatred, and the man who meted out to her such wealth of contempt, scorn, and dislike, but great as the pleasure was it was not so great as it might have been.

A hard, bitter look would come over the face which, to her infatuated *fiancée*, was so beautiful, so sweet, as Constance recalled how Maurice had failed her.

She had had no exact idea of what would follow on the denouement she had worked so hard to bring about, but one thing had seemed certain, and that was that Kit must suffer disgrace and humiliation, helped in a large measure by Maurice's madness about her.

There had been no thought of pity for Sybil Montgomery in these vague dreams of future revenge. There had only been that yearning for Philip to taste suffering, for Kit to be torn from the high place she had been given so suddenly.

And now, although the suffering was come, and each time Constance's eyes rested on the clear cut features of Philip Desmond and read the silent sorrow expressed on them, she knew that the suffering had indeed come. This was all that had happened: Kit, instead of being degraded, was raised a little higher, had won fresh laurels, made more friends.

It was gall and wormwood to Miss Marlowe to have to listen to the warm praise bestowed on her cousin for her good heart and unselfishness.

Even Lady Sinclair was touched by it.

"Really she is not so bad after all," she said to Constance. "It is not every girl would give up so much just to stay and nurse a crochety old woman. I like her better for this than I ever thought I should, Constance. It only shows one one should never make hasty judgments."

"I don't quite see how Lady Desmond could act very differently, a guest is taken seriously ill in her house, and she naturally gives a certain amount of attention to that guest, *voilà tout!*" Constance's manner and voice was always constrained when speaking of Kit, and Lady Sinclair always changed the subject quickly. She had a sort of vague idea that Constance's visit to Courtfield had not been quite satisfactory, but she asked no questions, and Miss Marlowe vouchsafed no remarks, and so the matter rested.

It was a bitter thing for Constance to have to curb her tongue about Kit. She could have started a magnificent scandal which would speedily have attained mammoth proportions, but she had a wholesome dread of Philip's anger, and she knew if she spoke he would keep his word and visit his wrath upon her, and she could not afford to let the world in general, and Horace Greaves in particular, know the poverty of her honour and principles. And after all she had some consolation.

"Their dream is spoiled," she said to herself often and often, "it did not last long. He has learnt the true meaning of an old man's folly. He may be as proud as he likes, he won't forget in a hurry, and though to me it is incomprehensible, yet it is also true that that our Maurice was in love with her—that is something for Sir Philip Desmond to remember all the time, and he will remember it doubly so since Maurice has flown away from temptation in this Quixotic fashion. Yes, I think I may make my mind easy that Philip Desmond knows what disappointment and unhappiness are—he bears it well, but it is a bitter burden all the same!"

Constance's unwomanly exultation over her success, marred though it was, would have deepened and intensified if she could have known the weight of the burden which lived both in Philip's heart and in the heart of his young wife.

Somewhat Kit did not really know how she lived and breathed and had her being. Since that day when Chris told her of Philip's departure to London, hope seemed to die in her breast. While he had been at Courtfield, even though they did not meet often, and

though those brief cold meetings were so terribly sad, yet—he had been her's—he had been near her—she could have found him in an instant, if a longing too great to be borne, urged her to his side, but since that day—what a mockery, what a horrible sham life had become! Was it possible it could have been she, Kit, who only a short few weeks ago had been so radiantly so wondrously happy?

She did not shed any tears in those first awful days when she realized that Philip meant to take himself out of her life for ever, that no matter what the surface life might be, the communion between them, the exquisite intercourse of heart, and love, and sympathy was utterly dead.

She shed no tears over her own unspeakable grief, those that came were shed for Sybil—Sybil whose face grew wan and whose eyes grew dull from silent, unselfish sorrow at the absence of her husband far away in a distant land where danger was an hourly companion.

Yes, Kit had a hard burden to bear here—something that wrung her tender heart to its uttermost depths. The only gleam of gladness that came was the knowledge that Sybil's real happiness was untouched—that doubt never crept into her paradise. If the adoration she had lavished on Maurice was not quite so great as it had been, the fault lay with Maurice in himself, and had nothing to do with that one worst fault of his, which Kit's keen sense of justice told her he was regretting as bitterly and sincerely as it was possible for one of his nature to do.

It was almost with a sense of pleasure, certainly of mental relief that the girl plunged into the anxieties of sick nursing. She was barely recovered from her own indisposition, but she forgot her own weakness most gallantly, and proved so tender and skilful a nurse that Lady Milborough was never happy except when Kit was hovering about her.

Philip on hearing of his old friend's precarious condition (and for several days it was a hard tussle with her for life itself) immediately travelled down to Courtfield.

He met Kit in the sick room, and they exchanged few words. The man's heart was wrung most bitterly to see the change that was come over her fair young beauty. She was very thin and the natural pallor of her complexion seemed accentuated, her mass of hair was brushed back from her brows as though its weight were almost too great a burden. Her eyes hurt him, as though she had given him some sharp stab. Philip could not endure the expression in them, and the cold, quiet manner with which she received him was something indescribably painful.

The sunshine of her youth seemed dead, the joyous, lovely young creature, who, for a time, had given him such exquisite happiness seemed to have vanished altogether, and this proud, cold, suffering woman, with her almost regal beauty, reigned in her stead.

With the bitterness of jealousy and the blindness of his mistake rankled in her breast, Philip could barely frame the few conventional words he was compelled to speak to her before others. His heart yearned over her as a mother over a child, she looked so wan, so delicate, despite her pride. From Chris he heard that she never left the sick-room if possible, and the strain was almost beyond her, a word a look from him formerly would have taught her to be careful of herself, but now, even if he could have uttered this request, he doubted whether she would have heeded it. Once their eyes met across the sick bed, and at the anguish written in those marvellous orbs Philip grew pale.

"She is brave, but it is almost more than she can endure. Ah! Kit, why did we ever meet? And yet it has not been my hand that has spoiled your life; that work was done before I crossed your path. Even now—ay, even now—how gladly would I give you the happiness your poor young heart craves

for, cost it what it might, but what can I do? He is lost to you for ever, and I—I can only stand by and grieve in my hopelessness for what can never be now!"

Such was the thought in his heart. Though the jealousy, the anger against Maurice (coupled with that broken feeling which comes when we find one we have trusted and cared for can work no such evil) still lived.

There was no anger now for Kit; only pity—great, deep pity—which sprang from his great, deep love.

It was on this visit to Courtfield he found Maurice's letter. It had lain there forgotten for days.

A sudden sorrow broke across the strong man's anger as he read and realised that he read too late.

The key-note of his big, generous, noble heart was touched by this letter from the man who had so deeply wronged him.

Had it reached him in time he would have put aside all feelings of jealousy and hatred as he did now, and have granted the last request of one who had been to him something in the light of a son.

But it was too late, Maurice had started, by this time was far on his way to Northern India, and Philip could only sit and read his broken words with eyes that did not see very clearly.

He was grateful to Maurice for the delicate yet firm testimony to Kit's nobility. He did not need this now; he knew the girl had never wronged him in thought or word.

He had conquered his anger against her, he had forgiven her her silence, he loved her more earnestly than before, because he pitied her so much.

In every line of her pale, changed face he read what to his mistaken mind was but evidence of the awful struggle that lived in her heart, the struggle between her love for Maurice and her duty to him and to herself.

He never doubted her love for Maurice. It was so natural—so very, very natural; whereas, for himself, he stifled a sigh.

How could he have ever been so foolish, so vain, so mad? What was there in him to inspire love—a middle-aged, grey-haired, man? He shivered at the remembrance of Maurice's gallant, handsome face rose before him, and then his own grew cold and stern as he realised how wantonly this young handsome man had played with Kit's heart, and how basely he had deceived Sybil, who gave him such a wealth of pure, true love.

Philip sat long in the sombre silence of his library. That day justice fought with mercy in his heart when the first weakness called up by Maurice's written words had faded from his mind, but mercy was the strongest.

Before he left Courtfield for town again he had answered Maurice's letter; answered it in a gentle, noble spirit, giving the young man all the consolation his heart could conceive.

He made no mention of Kit, but he said most truly that he would regard Sybil as a sacred charge, and that he hoped before death came as a finale to their lives that he and Maurice might be permitted to clasp hands again as they had been wont to do.

He did not see Kit before he went, and many a weary week dragged itself away before he did.

Chris was the communicating link between Philip Desmond and his wife.

From Chris, Philip had all the news of Courtfield; how Kit looked, what she said, the rides and drives they took together as Lady Milborough became convalescent, the clever way in which she managed the big household, and took part in the village matters. From Chris, too, in blunt, plain words, Sir Philip heard of his young wife's silence, of her pallor, of her quiet, apathetic submission to fate.

From Chris, Kit heard all there was to hear of her husband—of his success in the House, of his quiet, reserved life, of a brief week's illness which had made him thinner and much aged, of his indescribable kindness and

interest in himself (Chris), of how he urged and encouraged and assisted Kit's childhood's friend by every means in his power.

It was Chris Hornton's one thought, one desire to see Philip Desmond and Kit together again.

Something there was that he could not understand. He knew Kit thought her husband despised her, for what, in her harsh self-reproach she called her deceit to him.

She would not listen to Chris when he urged so vehemently he was certain this was not the case.

How otherwise would Philip have acted if she were wrong? Chris could not explain all he felt, only he knew that he was working in the dark in his meditation between the two; and he could only pray and hope as each day went by, and saw the chasm widening between them, that a glimmer of light would shine through the darkness of despair that would creep over his hope and show him the way to bridge the chasm and land Kit once more in the haven of her husband's love.

CHAPTER XXXIV., AND LAST.

AND now June was come—London was one vortex of gaiety. Constance Marlowe's wedding day was close at hand—balls, suppers, dinners, the opera, the park, all the thousand and one luxurious items that make up a London season were in full swing, and life seemed the keynote of joyousness itself. Down in the meadows about Courtfield, the ground was golden with cowslips, the scent of a million roses weighted the air, the soft buzz of the insect world, the faint note of the bird all heralded the near approach of summer time in the fulness of her beauty and splendour.

Kit, sitting under a group of trees on the lawn looking like some old picture, in her quaintly-fashioned white gown, talked and read to Lady Milborough, who was almost her bright, brisk, self again.

If the old lady divined that some great terrible shadow had fallen upon the lives of these two whom she loved so well she had too much tact and delicacy of thought to speak of it. She played her role so well, regretting Philip's apparent enforced absence from his home, and reproaching herself for her share in keeping Kit away from her husband that the girl never doubted but that the words Lady Milborough spoke were uttered in absolute truth and good faith. When ever she had to listen to a regret that she should not be in her proper place in town, Kit always answered hurriedly.

"I am much happier in the country. I am not a town mouse, dear Lady Mil," a name Philip had given to his kinswoman long ago. On this particular June morning Kit had been reading the events of the day to the old lady, and had even progressed so far as to repeat in her clear, pretty voice, a speech that Philip had made in the House the preceding night, when a servant came quickly across the lawn.

From afar Kit caught sight of the buff coloured envelope, and glanced at Lady Milborough with anxiety. Telegrams were rare visitors at Courtfield, and it was necessary to keep the old lady free from all excitement. It was with relief that Kit saw her reading had fallen evidently on deaf ears, Lady Milborough was sleeping quietly on her cushions. Kit moved away a few steps and opened the envelope and read the telegram.

The contents sent the blood, first to her face, and then so absolutely from it that she looked almost like death.

"A boy was born to Sybil this morning. She is very ill. She wishes for you—will you come to her if you are able? I think you would do her good."

It was signed "Philip."

Even in the sudden sorrow and anguish that smote her heart at thought of her sweet, gentle friend—joy, brief, fleeting as a flash of

lightning, but joy nevertheless, shot through her.

"Philip," he had put "Philip," not "Philip Desmond," or "Desmond," as he generally wrote in telegrams.

It was only one word—only a tiny, tiny word, but, oh! how much it seemed to carry to her. What a poem of song could have filled her heart, had she let this small ray of hope swell as it could have done. But self was never long prominent with Kit, and in another moment she remembered Sybil, and a great pang smote her as she realised the truth.

"She is very ill," Philip would never have written that, except it was absolutely true, "very ill!" Poor Sybil, poor, brave, gentle, sweet, Sybil.

A rush of tears blinded Kit's eyes as she stood for a moment. It was so hard, so terrible to realise, and only yesterday, only a few short hours ago a letter had come from Sybil—full of bright words, and much happiness, because Maurice had written so often and loved her so much, full of happy hopes over the approaching moment.

"I pray," Sybil had written, "I pray I may have a son. It will give Maurice such delight. He loves boys."

And now Sybil's prayer was granted, a son had come to her, but even here, knowing nothing, having only a vague few words to go on Kit knew the realisation of her prayer was to cost poor Sybil Montgomery her life.

It was a hurried journey to London despite all she had to do, and there was at least a quarter of an hour devoted to telling Lady Milborough as gently as she could (hiding the worst) the cause of her sudden departure, it was barely noon when Lady Desmond started for London.

To Kit it seemed a century since the moment she had received the telegram, so great was her anxiety and her desire to reach Sybil's side.

Chris was waiting for her at the station. She could not frame her question, but one glance at his face told her that she was not too late, that she would still gaze on the living face of her friend.

"Sir Philip sent me," Chris said, as they met, "he thought this would be the train you would catch."

It seemed an eternity that drive through the hot sunny London streets. Kit shivered as they drove up to the big house in Mayfair square. How this one spot haunted her, what anguish of mind was ever associated with it!

She scarcely knew how she got up the stairs. She seemed to be in a dream, out of which she woke when her eyes rested on Sybil's face with its smile of delighted welcome chasing away for an instant even the grim cold touch of death itself.

From that moment Kit never left the bedside. She felt, in a vague way, someone lifting the hat from her red gold hair, and drawing the gloves from her cold, resistless hands. She heard whispers of voices and the soft rustle of the nurse's gown, and once when her eyes had turned she had felt a gleam of comfort come vaguely into her heart as they rested on Philip.

"He is here, all is well," was the dreamy, intangible thought that drifted through her brain. It was a reversion to the time when she had learned to find her only comfort, her only joy when he was near.

After that the hours passed, the sunset night came, the trees out in the gardens moved faintly in the chill breeze, the moon came up slowly from behind the big houses opposite.

They had touched Kit gently and urged her to take some rest, she only shook her head, and tightened her hold on the frail hand Sybil had put out to her hours before.

"I am not tired, I am not tired," she answered, hardly knowing she spoke.

At midnight there came the change. The sleep that had seemed so sweet broke, the heavy eyelids were opened, the pallid lips

spoke only two words, the name dearest and sweetest to the dying ears.

"Maurice! Maurice!"

Kit bent forward hurriedly. The hand she held slipped through her fingers in a strange, nerveless sort of way. There was a curious chill in the air. She caught her breath and looked about her, seeing nothing, knowing nothing, only fighting with that horrible sensation in her throat and ears.

Sybil's eyes were closed, she had fallen to sleep again. There was no need to wait. She was better asleep, by and by she would waken, and then—

"Give her to me," Philip said, gently, as the nurse's strong arms received the slender, staggering figure.

He carried her out of the room in a sudden horrible fashion, he realised she was lighter than she had once been. Death had come to one young flower, a flower that had seemed as strong and vigorous as any in the world's garden. What if he should come again.

Sifting a cry of agony, Philip clasped Kit closer to his breast. He laid her down on a couch in one of the deserted rooms, and brushed the hair back from her brow.

The sight of her still white face to his distraught eyes wore the same look as that which lay on the dead girl's upstairs. Strong, brave man as he was, he trembled in every limb. He made no effort to recover, he could only kneel beside her, burying his face in the cushions on which she lay. It was the entrance of the nurse, calm, unemotional, professional that roused him.

"Let me advise you to take Lady Desmond away from here, she is better out of the house, Sir Philip," she said, in her quiet, even tones, "the strain and anxiety of these last hours will seem less if she is removed to other surroundings. She can do no good, she is better away."

The practical common sense of these words roused Philip to action. While the nurse went about the task of restoring Kit from her heavy unconsciousness, he had gone below and made known his wishes to the butler, who like the rest of the sad, disorganised household, was in deep and sincere sorrow at the loss of one whom all had loved.

Chris, faithful as any watch dog, was waiting in the hall, and stood looking up at the darkened staircase, his heart riven with grief, for he had grown to care deeply for Sybil, and he knew what this would mean to Kit.

His strong arms helped her husband to put her in the cab, and he drove with them to the house where Kit had shone in her radiant beauty as a bride only a few short months before.

As they parted Philip Desmond put out his hand to the young man.

"Good-night and Heaven bless you, Chris," he said, his voice broken and not clear. "You are a true friend, always ready, always eager, it may be that I shall have occasion to put your friendship to a stronger test now; but I can trust you, you will not fail me!"

"No, I will not fail—now or at any time," Chris answered.

He did not quite understand the purport of these words, but something in them gave him a sense of deep uneasiness, an anticipation of coming evil to the girl he loved, a sorrow even greater than that which she had endured.

It was three weeks later. The grave had closed over the fair young remains of Sybil Montgomery. The big house in Mayfair square was shut up, the few servants who remained wore garments of sombre hue.

Lady Grace Leith had gone abroad, Sir George was seen only occasionally. Constance Marlowe's wedding had come and passed without a hitch; she had been carried off to Switzerland by her infatuated husband.

Chris was down at Courtfield, whither he had travelled in company with Kit. They had been accompanied also by a grave, important looking woman, who seemed born to

command, and by a gentle faced young creature, whose office it was to act mother to the motherless little being whose life had cost Sybil Montgomery so much.

When she had lain in her coffin, they had found a folded paper among her things. It was not a letter—a short statement of a wish, but it was duly signed and witnessed, and it was regarded in the light of a will by all those she had left behind, even though its legality might have proved worthless.

"I wish in the event of my not recovering, and somehow I feel I shall not live," poor Sybil had written, "that so long as my beloved husband is away and unable to take charge of my child, it shall be given over to the absolute care of my dear friends, Philip and Katherine Desmond, to be subject to their will and authority until such time as my husband returns. I wish this because my husband would wish it, and because I know them to be the truest, noblest friends any living being could desire to have."

Then had followed her signature and those of the two who witnessed this simple, pathetic document.

No one arose to argue or object to Sybil's will, and everything was carried out as she would have desired.

To Kit this legacy of her dying friend was something more than sacred. The whole of her sorrowing, generous heart went out to the fragile atom of humanity thus given into the joint care of Philip and herself. There was something more besides—a faint, yet an exquisite gleam of hope.

"It is a tie that may bring him closer to me, that may lead him to forget and forgive!"

So ran the thought in her mind. It was there so perpetually, she was almost afraid of speaking it aloud.

And so out of her deep, deep sorrow—and she could not gauge the depths of her loss yet—there came this little gleam of joy.

From Philip himself there was nothing to encourage it. He was, if possible, colder, graver, more quiet than before. Once or twice Kit had caught a look in his eyes that sent the blood coursing through her veins like wildfire, but his lips had never moved, and she had come away to Courtfield with the motherless child as soon as the authorities gave consent for the infant to travel.

And now she was once more at Courtfield, and Philip was alone in town, but the apathy, the calm submission that had visited them both for so long after the breaking of their dream, seemed to have deserted them both.

Kit lived in a sort of fever. It hurt Chris to see the flush on her cheeks and the light in her eyes; they were beautiful, but they were too brilliant, and they spoke of a hot war within, of a perpetual struggle which must in time weigh out the strongest will power.

"You will tire yourself, Kit," he would say sometimes when he came upon her walking up and down, to and fro beneath the trees with Sybil's baby in her arms, resting on her troubled heart.

"I could walk for hours," she would cry. "I am never tired when he is with me."

These very words came to Philip's ears one late, hot afternoon. He stood unseen in an open doorway.

He watched the picture; she looked more beautiful than usual in her long dress of thin, black material, her head with its crown of red gold hair bent over the tiny face on her arm, her lips kissing softly the delicate tender skin.

Philip turned away abruptly, and stifled a groan as he walked.

"She does not heed me. His child, she has that; it is something, and in time, who knows, he himself. Yes—yes, I decide now. I will go now, it is only a coward who would hesitate!"

Half an hour later a servant approached Chris, who was engaged in the delight of baby worship.

"Sir Philip would like to see you in the library, sir," he said, deferentially.



[A SERVANT CAME ACROSS THE LAWN WITH A TELEGRAM, AND KIT GLANCED ANXIOUSLY AT LADY MILDOROUGH.]

"Philip!" Kit looked up startled, and her heart beat to suffocation.

She had not even known he intended to pay Courtfield a visit. A wildness of joy and sorrow—sorrow in anticipation rather than realisation—mingled in her heart.

For the sake of outer appearance she affected no surprise before the servant.

"This is taking us by storm, if you like," she said, and Chris' quick ears read the trembling uncertainty in her voice, "go, Chris. I must take baby back to the nursery, and then I will come."

Chris obeyed her. He found Philip busy writing, his table bespiced with papers. He smiled faintly at the younger man came in.

"I have just a quarter of an hour to give you, Chris. Sit down."

Chris drew up a chair and waited. Philip wrote on, and then threw down his pen.

"Chris, a little while ago I told you I should put your friendship to the test. I now fulfil my words. I am going away almost immediately. Start for Africa in a few days. You know I am something of an explorer, so it may not astonish you to hear I have at last allowed — to persuade me, and I shall journey straight to him and join his expedition. I refused his offer at Christmas, but I now find I can go."

The other turned very pale.

"But—Kit—your wife, sir?"

Philip compressed his lips.

"I leave her in your charge. This is where I require your friendship, Chris."

Chris looked straight before him.

"And suppose I—I refuse this?" he said.

Philip's eyes opened in amazement.

"What!" He could find no other word.

"Suppose I say that I refuse this, not because I am not sufficiently your friend, but because I dare to hold myself your friend in very word and truth. Sir Philip," Chris got on to his feet, "I am much younger than

you. You are a great man, a wise man, a noble man, but—but you are also a blind one. No, you must hear me out. I should have said all this long ago, but—but the truth of things only came to me lately, and I have been waiting—waiting for an opportunity to speak. I said you were blind, Sir Philip. I say it again, and not only blind—but mad! You are breaking your heart over a silly, a horrible mistake, and you are breaking Kit's heart at the same time!"

Philip had risen, and with one hand was leaning on the back of his chair.

"What are you saying?" he asked, in a low, hurried voice.

"The truth," Chris said, valiantly, "the truth at last, thank Heaven! You are going away, you are leaving Kit for ever. You intend to seek your own death. Ah! I understand you too well. You are willing to do all this, and why—why?"

In his excitement Chris did not hear the sound of her dress on the carpet. Kit was close beside him. Philip's eyes were riveted on her face. She looked like a woman distraught as the meaning of the words she heard beat into her brain.

"You do all this, Sir Philip," Chris said, in his excitement, "because you are blind enough to think Kit does not love you, that she loves Maurice Montgomery, and"—he broke off and dropped his voice to a whisper—"why she loves you better than her life. She will die if you leave her. She cannot live without you!"

He turned suddenly. A low, quivering voice spoke from beside him.

"It is true, it is true. Oh! Philip, Philip, my love, my husband, you must not leave me! I shall die, I shall die! I cannot live without you!"

Chris turned away hurriedly. His eyes were wet and dull, but as he looked back his sight was clear to see the red-gold of her hair

resting against her husband's dark coat as she lay clasped in that husband's arms.

And what more? Twelve years later Maurice Montgomery came back to England a worn, suffering invalid. His one joy was the constant companionship of a handsome, stalwart boy who ministered to his father as gently as any woman, but whose strongest love was given to a beautiful woman whom he called Mother Kit, to a noble-faced man with white hair and keen eyes that could be yet so tender, to a clever, somewhat cynical barrister called Chris Hornton, and to a group of merry handsome children who romped and played under the veteran trees at Courtfield Manor.

For Kit's happiness one had but to look into her eyes and read the story of absolute content written there as she put her arm through her husband's and rested her cheek against his shoulder.

It is not given to humanity to have perfect happiness, but the love and the joy that lived in the lives of Philip Desmond and Kit came as near akin to this as could possibly be.

[THE END.]

WE may now expect the postmarks on our letters to become more and more illegible. The cold weather hardens the ink used on the stamping pads, and the marking stamps being of iron become chilled. As a result our winter postmarks are not so good, as a rule, as even the summer postmarks.

A VERY rare event is reported from Norway—viz., the "stone" wedding of a farmer, Einar Væseth, and his wife, Eliseth. The husband is ninety-six and his wife ninety-one years of age, and they have successfully celebrated respectively their silver, golden, diamond, and iron weddings.



[VARR ROSE TO THE OCCASION GRANDLY, AND DECLARED HIMSELF THE ACCEPTED LOVER OF MISS NEWTON !]

NOVELETTE.]

THE SACKVILLE'S SECRET.

CHAPTER I.

SHE was certainly the prettiest girl in the whole school. There was something bewitchingly sweet in the glowing *mignonne* face, with its pouting red lips, red as the heart of a pomegranate, a colour repeated in the rounded cheeks, which set off the big, velvety brown eyes, with their long fringe of up-curling black lashes, making them look softer and darker. Then the frame of brown hair, which in the sunlight had gold gleams in its curly waves, was a fitting one for the bright face with its arch expression, that would have redeemed even a plain visage.

Yes, there was not the shadow of a doubt about it, Margaret, commonly known as Peg Moreland, was out and away the prettiest, most fascinating, most lovable girl out of the forty young ladies who received instruction in various useful and elegant accomplishments in the seminary of Madame Laurent, at Beaute-sur-Mer, a seaside town of France. But though the prettiest, she was also the poorest, and was received on different and more economical terms than the other thirty-nine demoiselles.

She had to instruct some of the younger pupils in the manipulation of the keyboard of the various pianos in Madame's large establishment, and elucidating the mysteries of crochets, quavers, and semi-quavers, &c., in consideration of which she was received for exactly half the sum per annum which was paid for the other pupils, a fact which did not in the least affect her sunny temperament or her position in the school, for she was a general favourite, as much with Madame and the governesses as with the girls. They might

have been jealous of her good looks, only as they were all well off they considered that their money balanced the scale, so petted and were kind to the one who was less well provided for than themselves.

Her chief friend and confidant was Eugénie Newton, a tall, dashing brunette, whose mother was a Parisian, and father an officer in the Indian army, both of whom were in India where they were likely to remain for some time, Colonel Newton having a good staff appointment, which he had no intention of relinquishing until it relinquished him, or the climate obliged him to quit the East for his health's sakes, and return to old England's green shores and temperate clime. Their only, and dearly-loved child was getting a little restive at being kept so long at school, for the Colonel, fearing for her health, had determined to keep her in a cool country as long as he could, and not have her out to sun-baked, heat parched India.

Now, this little arrangement did not suit the dashing and self-willed Eugénie at all. She was within a month or two of eighteen, of a robust physique, and blessed with a great capacity for enjoyment. Flirtation, fun, frolic, intrigue, what you would, the handsome brunette was ready for, and having a just appreciation of her charms, rightly conjectured that in India, that playground and territorial paradise of females, married and unmarried, she would have no end of a good time, and queen it over the circle in which her father moved. Of course there would be no end of young officers and delightful fellows knocking about, with whom she could flirt and jest till the right man came along, and she consented to become a blushing bride.

The pictures her imagination painted were so alluring that occasionally she grew furious at the idea of still being in leading strings at a French seminary. Obligated to walk in column like the other girls, stum on the piano, scorch scales for an hour once per

diem, and do many other school girlish things, that were extremely distasteful to her, but ill accorded with her exalted ideas of her own consequence and importance.

When these restless, restive fits were on her Eugénie Newton was dangerous, dangerous to herself and her own interests, so tenderly watched over by loving parents, and dangerous to those of her companions whom she drew into the whirlpool of her selfish vanities.

There had been more than one escapade of a scarcely creditable nature in which Eugénie had been ringleader, and for which she and those implicated with her had been punished with as much severity as Madame Laurent dared to use; for, sad to relate, in every case there had been a "dear, delightful" young man mixed up, who had shown his devotion more or less plainly, for the dashing, restless, discontented Eugénie, who cared not one fig for her admirers, only seeking to pass the time, and find in a little unwholesome excitement, the panacea for the ennui from which she suffered in common with two or three of the other pupils, whose one idea in life was men, and whose one aim marriage. Some of the girls were sentimental, and dreamt of a romantic elopement by moonlight with a whickerando, one whose only worldly possessions were the clothes on his back, a pair of fine eyes, a soft seductive voice, and a tender, caressing manner.

Miss Newton wasn't such a fool as to indulge in any dreams of that sort. She liked to be admired, to see men's eyes fasten on her glowing face with involuntary admiration, while their lips uttered flattering compliments.

She liked their homage and their presents, the flowers that had to be smuggled into the school in all sorts of queer receptacles, that were tossed over the garden wall with such dexterity that they fell at her feet when she was promenading the paths between Madame's trim flower-beds with other pupils, that were

dropped into the pew at her side when she was in church; and the lean, depressed, half-starved English governess who took them to the Protestant place of worship was on her marrowbones devoutly praying with her poor, pale face hidden in her shabby gloves, and oblivious of everything going on around her.]

Madame was a staunch Catholic, and went to confess and to mass much earlier than her Protestant pupils went to their devotions.

So she was obliged to trust some eight or ten girls to the care of Miss Smith twice a day on Sunday and occasionally on Saint's days, and great was the rejoicing of the unregenerate Eugénie and some of her past-redeeming companions when they went out under the chaperonage of "Smithy," as they irreverently and familiarly termed her.

For Smithy was no match for them, and dared not report their pranks, more especially as Miss Newton often bestowed on her a dress, mantle, or bonnet that had been worn by the fickle heiress perhaps twice, and which saved Miss Smith buying clothes, and enabled her to send a little more of her hard-earned salary to her widowed mother away in old England.

Eugénie and three or four of her closest friends invariably insisted on sitting in the pew behind Miss Smith, where they could listen to an ardent whisper from their respective admirers, who planted themselves in seats contiguous to those occupied by the *démouillées*, and who handed them hymn books in which were concealed dainty three-cornered notes, breathing in every line the most ardent and devoted love, and urging their *inamoratas* to grant them an interview "by moonlight alone" when the dragon who guarded this "rosebud garden of girls" was snoring peacefully between the blankets.

Now, though Margaret Moreland was the prettiest and most attractive of Miss Smith's charges, she was the one who gave her least trouble on those pilgrimages to the English church. In fact, she gave her no trouble at all, never owned her a twinge of anxiety.

Peg would seat herself demurely by the side of the governess and never lift those soft brown eyes of hers from her little red prayer-book, while often the bewitching young face was hidden in a pair of gloves only one degree less shabby than Miss Smith's, while she treated with a quiet contempt all the advances of the young jackanapes, who thinking the old saying of "birds of a feather flocking together" held good in this case as in most others, offered her their rather impertinent homage.

Of course Peg had her dreams like every other girl, and indulged now and again in a little building of castles in the air, the weaving of a happy future, for she was very fond of little children, and had a lurking, hardly defined, hope that some day she might be a wife and mother—what woman has not?—but she had no desire for the admiration of empty-pated fools, the homage of men who would swear they loved her better than life itself at 10 A.M. and utter the same lie to Eugénie Newton at 6 P.M.

No, that was not the sort of love she dreamed of, but a true, noble, steady affection that would survive the wear-and-tear of daily life, the petty worries incidental to the marriage state, that would make every trouble lighter, every burden bearable, brighten the close of life, and even triumph over the terrors of death.

Of course Peg knew all about Eugénie's escapades, because that vain and unabashable damsel insisted upon making her a confidante rather against her will, for though Peg at seventeen not unnaturally took an interest in other girl's love affairs, still her natural good sense told her that for one in her position it was necessary to be careful and circumspect or her prospects of success in the future would be nil.

Peg Moreland's position was rather a painful, desolate one. She was an orphan. Her father had been the only son of Sir Roger Moreland, of Adeane Place, her mother the

second and youngest child of a Devonshire farmer, a very lovely girl who had won the heart of the Baroness's son by her beauty and sweetness of temper.

Lady Moreland never forgave her son for marrying beneath him, not even on his death-bed, when he implored her pardon and begged her to care for his wife and his child, left destitute by his death, for he had nothing but what he made by his paintings, and that was little enough. All the money belonging to Lady Moreland, who had been a Miss Adeane, and brought her husband a large fortune in exchange for his old name and a title, and though kindly, good-hearted Sir Roger had soon secretly forgiven his son for his *mésalliance*, and hankered after his society and a sight of the little grandchild that he knew was born about a year after the marriage, he dared not openly to show his longing, for my lady seldom allowed her son's name to be mentioned; and after his death her charities to his wife and child consisted of a present yearly of ten pounds at Christmas, which Agnes Moreland took for the sake of the little child dependent on her.

The latter had to return to the old farmstead in Devon, where her grim, elder sister, Patience—who, by the way, had not a single grain of patience in her whole composition—reigned as mistress, Timothy Gregory having died soon after his daughter's runaway match, and where she managed the farm and the men with a masterly hand, making it answer better than her father had.

She received Agnes with soant affection, and gave her to understand that she must work for her living, as she, Patience, encouraged no idlers about the Dene.

Agnes had no choice—beggars cannot be choosers—so she swallowed the bitter pill, and became a sort of upper servant in the home where once she had reigned as dearly and beloved child.

The hard work and chagrin did its worst on her. In three years she went to join her husband, and little Margaret was left an orphan at the age of five, in the power of, and totally dependent on, a woman who knew not the quality of mercy, and who was every day becoming more and more miserly, more intent upon amassing gold, and saving every farthing she could.

Peg's childhood was rather a dreary one. No one to love her save the animals, who grew to know her and to respond to her caresses with almost human ardour.

Her aunt early made use of her to feed the poultry, drive home the cows at even when the farm hands were busy, and do many other things more fitted to a man's strength than a child's weakness.

But as Peg was cheery and willing over the work, grim Miss Gregory saw no reason why she should not make use of the child.

However, when her niece was eleven, she suddenly awoke to the fact that it would be necessary to educate her, especially as she meant her to go out as a governess, so having a friend at Beauté, who knew Madame Laurent, she got the girl taken as pupil for a very small sum, part of which was defrayed by the ten pounds sent by Lady Moreland with scrupulous regularity, accompanied by a few curt lines of inquiry from the grand dame who did not concern herself much about her dead son's child, because she was well pleased with her daughter who had married a mushroom lord, and was the mother of a bonny boy, on whom Lady Moreland centred her hopes, and to whom she intended to leave Adeane Place, and the greater part, if not all, her money.

And so Peg had become a pupil at Madame Laurent's first-class finishing *Seminaire*, and for six years had never been in England, nor seen her grim aunt, but had worked with a will and so blithely and patiently that she had won the goodwill of Madame and her *nettelles*, and something more from poor, faded-looking, meek Miss Smith, who loved the beautiful young girl, who was the only one

in the school who treated her with kindness and consideration, and would have done anything in the world that she could for her, and often sat up late at night when the moon was at the full, or when she could secrete a piece of candle, stitching away at her clothes, altering and furnishing up the girl's sorry frocks, or turning the ribbons in her hair to make them look smarter; and Peg was duly grateful for "Smithy's" kindness, and would give her a warm hug the next day, and a few kind words that more than repaid the poor creature for the loss of sleep and short night's rest.

CHAPTER II.

"I THINK you might come, Peg."

"I don't think it is right, Eugénie."

"Pooh!"

"Madame is out. It would be mean to take advantage of her absence."

"Stuff! Rubbish! What a Puritan you are. You ought to have lived two hundred and fifty years ago, and have had one of Cromwell's snuffing old Roundheads for a father."

"And instead I had a man who had he lived then, would have been one of Prince Rupert's gayest cavaliers," responded Peg with a smile.

It was a Wednesday afternoon, a half-holiday. The two girls were in Miss Newton's bedroom, for that imperious and self-willed damsel had declined to sleep in the large rooms where six or eight pupils snored in concert, and on writing a dolorous account of her miseries to her parents, had induced her father to pay an extra twenty pounds per annum, in consideration of which sum, Madame Laurent had consented to allow her chief and most lucrative pupil to occupy a small corner room facing South, with a delightful view of the sea and esplanade, which just suited Eugénie, and where she concocted the amatory epistles which she managed to get conveyed to her numerous admirers, for wonderful and potent was the charm of the golden key she wielded with no scrupulous hand—a kind of open sesame to everything; and when she held a five franc piece before Bertha, Jeanne, or Marie's eyes, adding a few persuasive words with her glib tongue, the hitherto incorruptible maids gave way, and her *billets-doux* left the school on the evenings the *femmes des chambres* went out.

Now it happened that Madame Laurent had gone that particular Wednesday afternoon to pray with a recently bereaved friend at the shrine of "Our Lady," in the church of Sainte Marie at B—, and as her prayers were lengthy, the supposition was, that she would not be back until late.

The proverb of the cat and mice held good. The two resident French governesses had only waited to see Madame's portly form disappear with the hired carriage called to convey her to the station, when they hurried on their walking attire and were off to see their respective families, who lived in the town, and only Miss Smith was left in the school.

Who cared for Miss Smith?

Certainly not the girls. There was an uproar in the corridor, up and down which they raced with deafening shouts. There was the sound of revelry from the schoolroom, where some of the younger pupils were demolishing a basket of "tuck," and the ring of light laughter and gay *badinage* was to be heard in the garden, where a score or so of *démouillées* were sprawling about on the soft turf, in easy but inelegant attitudes.

Madame's rule was stiff and severe. It was a blessed relief to these young creatures to be unguarded and natural in their gestures, attitudes, and conversation.

"How delightful it must be to-day by the sea," sighed Eugénie, heaving a sigh and glancing at the sun-bright waters, each ripple of which reflected a million gem-like sparkles on its blue surface.

"Very delightful," agreed Peg, half unconsciously echoing the sigh, as her eyes too sought the sea.

"If you think so, why are you disagreeable? Why do you refuse to come and take a stroll with me along the shore?" pouted the heiress.

"Madame gave no permission to go," remarked the younger girl, still wistfully gazing out over the sparkling stretch of gently heaving water.

"A fig for the old *châtelaine*," responded Eugénie, with a flourish of her frilled draperies. "Why should she go out and enjoy herself, while we are cooped up in the house on such a lovely day?"

"I don't know about the enjoyment," smiled Peg, "and there is the garden, you can go out there."

"Not amongst those noisy brats, thank you. I'd much rather not. Their yells are deafening, even here. I could not stand them at close quarters. Besides, I want to be by the sea."

"Then why not go out by yourself, as you are so bent on it?" suggested her companion.

"I don't care to go out by myself," responded Miss Newton, with a frown.

Of course she did not. If she went out alone, and was discovered absent without leave, she would have to bear the brunt of Madame's wrath and the consequent punishment, whereas if she could induce the governess pupil to accompany her, and anything went wrong, she had only to hold her tongue, and let all the blame fall on her companion. Madame would want a scapegoat on whom to vent her just wrath, and Eugénie knew very well she would pour the vials of her wrath on poor, friendless, dependent, Peg's head, and discreetly absolve the rich, influential pupil from all blame in the matter. So she went on coaxing and persuading, for she was terribly anxious to get out.

She had a little *affaire de cœur* on hand that was rather more than anxious to prosecute, and bring to a successful issue.

Some five or six weeks before some relatives of her mother's had stayed a few days at Beanté on their way to England, and at the hotel at which they put up was a young man who managed to scrape acquaintance with her friends, and get introduced to her one evening when she was dining with them.

He was a tall, good-looking fellow in a rather flashy style, and called himself Lord Varr, which was the name and title inscribed in the visitor's book.

But though fairly well-mannered, and decidedly well-dressed, he lacked the genuine hall mark of true good breeding, that stamp of gentle blood which only thoroughbred men and women ever possess, and to the initiated keen observer was no snob.

In truth he was no lord at all, but the son of a city brewer, who had been knighted for brewing extra good beer, or because his wife wore finer diamonds than anybody else, or something equally ridiculous, and thinking he would receive more attention as a nobleman, coolly passed himself off as one deceiving some folk, and amongst the number Miss Newton.

"Lord" Varr was very much to her taste. He had no particularly fine susceptibilities to be hurt by her want of candour and selfish vanities. He was lively and good tempered, admired her immensely, and was lavish in his presents and compliments.

It was evident he had plenty of money, and Eugénie was seriously thinking that if he should ask her to share his fortune that she would not refuse him, and as through a powerful pair of opera-glasses, which she possessed, she had seen him lounging on a seat on the esplanade, conspicuous by reason of the extremely light, large-patterned suit he wore, she was wild with anxiety to get out and join him, to once more listen to his florid compliments, and encounter the amorous glance of his eyes, and perhaps be the recipient of a packet of gloves, or a box of pralines, or a

bunch of Malmaison roses, trifles which she grabbed eagerly, though she did not want them, as incense offered at the shrine of beauty.

"Now, Peg, do come out like a dear," she urged for the hundredth time, putting her arm round the other's neck, and hugging her with well-simulated affection.

"Why are you so anxious to get me to go out with you?" queried Peg, the slightest shade of suspicion in her clear eyes, for she remembered one or two adventures in which she had not come off altogether scot-free, though Eugénie had. "Is there any one you want to see?"

"Of course not, Peg, you goose," promptly replied the untruthful one. "I am only dying for a walk by the sea, just at the edge, where I can see the little waves rush in and lap the beach; and oh! Peg, I must have an ice at Crévin's, and a packet of nougat, and if you are a good girl I'll give you an ice and some mougat too."

Now, unfortunately, Peg had a weakness for ices and sweets, and precious few she got of them. Little more than a child, the bait was too alluring to be refused, and drew her, tempted and deceived, to her fate, and a sad enough one it was, poor child!

A quarter of an hour later the two girls went out at a side door, down through the kitchen garden unobserved by anyone, "Smithy" being in the flower garden trying to quell the uproar of the juniors, and Eugénie, being provided with a key for the garden door, which she had heavily bribed old Jacquet, Madame's factotum, to obtain for her, quietly opened it, and when they passed through as quietly closed it, putting the key safely in her pocket, and they were out in the sunlit street that led immediately on to the sea front, one rather pale and nervous, the other flushed with anticipated triumph, and ready for anything.

How pleasant it was in the glow and brilliance of the summer's day. How pure and sweet the air was with that strong flavour of salt about it that briny freshness, which seemed to stir and quicken the blood in their veins as it with subtle, magnetic touch.

How delightful to be beyond the cloister-like quiet, the monotonous dullness that usually reigned in Madame's leafy garden. Here they were in the world of it, there they always seemed apart from mankind, shut off from their brethren, trammelled and constrained by fifty stiff rules that allowed them no latitude, no ease or naturalness; but made them puppets, automatons sorely against their wish and will, engendering longings after an unwholesome diet, both mental and physical, which a less rigid and happier system would not have produced; but there in the sunlit street they could converse in their own tongue, stop when they pleased to look into the gay shops, gesticulate and laugh freely if they chose, and walk without turning out their toes like a dancing mistress.

There was so much to look at, so much to interest, the season was at its height at Beanté, and there were a goodly number of *élégantes* from Paris, Vienna, St. Petersburg, and some Londoners strolling about. The feminine portion of the strollers gowned and hatted in the most extraordinary way, which of course attracted Miss Newton's eyes, she always being on the alert to copy a new frock, or find a model for a fresh hat, though she already possessed numbers, more than she could ever possibly hope to wear out.

Peg was not much interested in the fashions. Flowers, frocks, and beflowered headgear were beyond her reach. Rather did she enjoy the beauties of nature. The stretches of green pasture on the uplands, and the cliffs whose tall summits were crowned by waving golden grain, that seemed as though its colour was a reflection caught from the blaze of orange, lemon, and gold lights in the sky, that over-arched in a soft, blue dome, along which King Sol threw his fiery splendour, the sparkle of which was caught

by the blue, dancing waves, and thrown back in a million brilliant sparkles, that formed a pathway right across the sea to old England's white-cliffed shores.

"Isn't it lovely?" ejaculated Peg whose big brown eyes were fixed on the sea, and whose colour was returning under the influence of the charming day. "Look at those sparkles on the sea, Eugénie. Like diamonds, I wish we could capture some."

"Rather have the real thing," rejoined the other indifferently, whose eyes were fixed on a Parisian dame in a wonderful costume of bright, red and blue, with a thing like a huge dinner plate on her head, that seemed perilously near flying away whenever there was a puff of wind.

"They could never be as bright as those gems."

"More valuable," remarked the elder girl. "Sun sparkles have no market value."

"Of course not. Still they are lovely. I like them better than diamonds."

"Oh! you little goose!" smiled Miss Newton. "Come, shall we go to Crévin's? My teeth are longing to meet in a bar of nougat."

"If you like," responded Peg, with a half-wistful glance at the sea, which she seldom saw, for her bedroom which she shared with Smithy and four of the junior pupils, looked out on a dead wall, which was not an enlivening prospect.

"Yes, I do like," responded the heiress, promptly, for her sharp eyes had seen the light large patterned suit, and of course its wearer rise from the seat on the esplanade, and come sauntering slowly up the street.

CHAPTER III.

CRÉVIN'S was a restaurant, *café*, and confectioners all rolled into one. It was a grand looking establishment, with a tempting array of dainties displayed behind its plate-glass windows, while in front were little marble-topped tables at which two or three folk could comfortably discuss an ice, a cup of coffee, or some fruit. Within, leading from the entrance, was a marble hall, with larger tables, where rather more substantial things were served, and with its decorations of palms, glasses and lamps, was a charming place, beyond was a dining saloon, where every imaginable delicacy could be served in a marvellously short time, and upstairs were private rooms.

Crévin's things were delicious, but rumour said rather fast people frequented his establishment. The frisky matron, with the too confiding husband, who let other fellows pay for what his pretty wife consumed. The grass widow whose better half was the lord only knows where. Fashionable young men, with more shirt-collar and cuff than brains, the foreign-looking and brigand-like individuals, who had plenty of money and no manners, and ladies whose cheeks were distressingly pink, a pinkness that they never lost, let the emotions of their owners be what they might, whose hair was intensely yellow, whose eyes were surrounded by a thick, black rim, and were bold and unblinking, and whose frocks were wonderful of hue and build.

It was all very well for John Bull to take his wife of twenty years standing there if he chose, but it was distinctly not a place for two young girls of seventeen and eighteen to go to alone. Eugénie Newton was quite well aware of this, poor Peg, who was as innocent as a baby and knew nothing of the wiles and snares of this wicked world was unconscious that she was doing wrong, and likely to incur Madame's wrath.

The entrance of the girls made a little stir in the *café*. Its occupants were mostly men, and they looked up as the two tall, slight young figures, entered the marble hall.

Both were likely to attract attention. Eugénie so erect and confident in her bearing,

with her brilliant colouring and bold, black eyes that challenged admiration in such an unmistakable fashion, and Peg with her lovely bright, innocent face and shy look, seeming to shrink rather than court masculine admiration, the pomegranate colour in her cheeks heightened by embarrassment, and her long lashes making a dark shadow on their rounded softness.

Eugénie marched up to a table, and seating herself, called imperiously for the *garçon*, ordering most expensive ices and cakes and a box of nougat, into which she at once set her little white teeth when it was brought.

Had she meant to pay for these delicacies herself she might have been less lavish. But she had arranged to meet "Lord" Varr at Crévin's the first afternoon she could get out, and having seen him and his conspicuous suit strolling leisurely up the street she knew she was safe; and before they touched their ices Varr came lounging in, looking about as though seeking for someone, and with him was a small, extremely handsome man, whose eyes, hair and skin were so dark that they might well warrant the supposition he was an Italian.

His air was more careless and disinterested than Varr's, and he was steering towards a table occupied by a brace of the afore-mentioned pink and yellow ladies, when seeing his companion turn abruptly to the right he followed him, a little exclamation of pleasure escaping his lips as his eyes fell on Peg's lovely face, which suddenly lost all its brilliant bloom as the young men approached and greeted them.

The moment she saw Varr, Peg knew she had been tricked and deceived by her school-fellow. It was not the first time she had been an unwilling witness and assistant at the assignations of the pseudo Lord and the Anglo-Indian heiress, and she felt a great wane of indignation sweep over her at her friend's treachery and untruthfulness.

What was sport to Eugénie might be death to her, and she was vaguely disquieted at the admiring glances of Varr's companion, Tom Tyson, for she recognised in him one of those who had for some months past pestered her with unwelcome attentions in church, and had been introduced to her about a month before by Varr when the four had met on the seashore, and she had been forced to endure Tyson's company as she could not return to the *Seminaire*, the key of the garden door being safe in the depths of Miss Newton's pocket, who was a great deal too much interested in her love affairs, listening to the supposed nobleman's high flown compliments, to bother her heart about poor Peg's terror and fearful visions of Madame's just wrath.

"How de ye do, Miss Newton? This is an unexpected pleasure, Miss Moreland," he said, very eagerly, as he took Peg's reluctant hand in his, smiling and showing his splendid white teeth, thrown out into such vivid contrast by his dark skin and black moustache. "I did not expect to meet you here!"

"Nor I you!" she retorted, quickly bending her head to escape his eager gaze and pretending to be busy over her ice, while Varr and Eugénie were talking confidentially with their heads in close juxtaposition.

"I hope the pleasure is as great to you as it is to me," he said, with another audacious smile, as he drew a chair somewhat inconveniently close to hers, crushing the frills of her white gown that it had taken Miss Smith the whole of the previous half-holiday to starch and get up.

"I don't know," responded Peg, at a loss for something to say.

"I do, though," he told her, pointedly, as he began to nibble a piece of nougat. "I've been dying to see you for six whole days."

"You don't look like it," she remarked, as though she took the speech *au sérieux*. "Don't be cruel. I've hardly slept since last Sunday."

"Why?" she inquired, in incautious innocence.

"You wouldn't look at me. Not even once, though I did get up at a most remarkable hour to be at early service, and prayed devoutly to every saint in the calendar to make you kind."

"I don't see why I should look at you," she told him, with an uncompromising plainness. "Ah! cruel!" he sighed, in a mock melodramatic fashion. "Shall I tell you why?"

"If you choose," she replied indifferently. "It is because you have the loveliest eyes I have ever seen, and I should like to gaze down into them for ever," said Tyson, meaningly.

Peg blushed furiously at this speech—a painful crimson flush that spread up to the roots of her golden-brown hair, and tinged her throat and ears with its warm flood—and tried to turn her face away from his tenacious gaze.

But he only laughed and pelted her lightly with the leaves of a rose that he had in his coat, and which he tore to pieces to throw at her.

"What shall we do to-day, my queen?" asked Varr of Eugénie. "We must make the most of this holiday."

"What you like," she rejoined with unusual sweetness.

"No; what you like, *ma belle*."

"We are in love's land to-day;

Where shall we go?

Love, shall we start or stay,

Or sail or row?

There's many a wind and way,

And never a May but May.

We are in love's land to-day;

Where shall we go?"

he quoted.

"I did not know you were poetical," she said, looking at him and smiling a little.

"Neither did I, until lately. You see, love can make a man do anything!"

"Oh! love, love, love!" she exclaimed, with an affectation of petulance, "how you harp upon that one string."

"Naturally, when I am with you," he retorted, coolly. "You inspire the theme."

"Oh, rubbish," she said, quickly, for it struck her his lordship was more in earnest than he had hitherto been, and meant business, and it was not her game to allow him to propose just at once.

She wished first to receive an answer to an epistle she had despatched to England to some friends who knew the Varrs, and who would be able to tell her all about them, and until she received the answer she was not anxious for him to propose.

Her acceptance of his proposal would depend entirely upon his actual social position and the length of his purse.

The fair Eugénie had not the slightest intention in the world of bestowing her hand upon her admirer unless he proved to be a Simon Pure, an aristocrat, and, moreover, a wealthy one.

"It is a fact."

"Be sensible, and don't talk nonsense," she said, lily, and her tone and manner were so very uncompromising that the young man felt snubbed *pro tempore*, and wisely changed the subject, suggesting that they should go for a row or a sail, a suggestion at which Miss Newton caught eagerly, but which filled Peg with horror, for she was by no means a good sailor, and shrank from the prospect of tossing about on the ocean's wide bosom.

However, Eugénie was set on going for a sail, and together the four bent their steps towards the beach, where, after some discussion between the girls, and a flat refusal on the part of Peg to trust herself in the light and unsafe-looking craft Varr chose, he and Eugénie sailed off, leaving Tyson and Peg alone together, side by side on the silvery sands, each grain of which glittered like precious metal in the brilliant sunrays, she looking distressed and embarrassed, he delighted and content.

"Will you please go away and leave me alone?" she said, desperately, after a minute's pause, raising a pair of lovely beseeching eyes to his.

"I really cannot do that," he replied, quietly.

"Please do," she urged, almost tearfully. "Sorry to refuse a lady's request, but Miss Newton has left you in my charge, and I must do my best to amuse you until our friends return."

"But," she faltered, "if—if Madame should see us."

"No fear of that," he replied, confidently.

"Let us walk along the beach to the *Saints Croix*. You know what a lovely little secluded spot it is. No one will see us there, except the gulls and shorelarks, and you won't mind them?" with a look of inquiry, and something more straight into her upraised orbs.

"Oh, no. It is a lonely spot."

"Then come to it. It will be a veritable earthly paradise on such a day as this."

And after a while, Peg allowed herself to be persuaded against her better judgment, and paced beside him over the silvery strand until they came to a sort of cove or cove, which was a mass of verdure—verdure which climbed up the slope right away to the brow of the cliff, from the summit of which rippled down a miniature cascade of sparkling diamond-bright water, that when it reached the level, tripped over mossy boulders and silvery strand with a gentle gurgling noise, that harmonised with the "clear, keen joyance" of the wild birds as they warbled their joyous lays, the hum and murmur of myriad insects stirred into life and vigour by the bright sunshine, which stole in tiny shafts here and there through the thick leafage, gilding the countless varieties of grass and ferns with its golden rays, and the whispering of the sea as it lapped the strand with monotonous regularity.

Above, over the softly blue sky light vaporous clouds were floating towards the west, towards a broad band of orange and amber light, above which was a streak of rosy cloud, and then a blaze of gold which showed it was the throne of King Sol.

CHAPTER IV.

"Let us sit here," said Tyson, throwing himself on a soft bed of moss that was heaped in velvety masses round the foot of a great tree that spread out its giant branches till they almost touched the surging waters, and the pebble and weed strewn astrand.

"Come," as she hesitated, and stretching up his hand he drew her gently down beside him. "Now," as she yielded to his touch, and sank down with that easy grace of movement, which was not her least charm, on the mossy couch, "what shall I do to amuse you?"

Peg looked at him with those shy lovely brown eyes of hers, that had the power to make his volatile heart beat quicker, but all she said was, "I don't know."

"You must tell me," he smiled (Tom Tyson smiled upon every possible occasion when he was with a woman, for he knew his smile was irresistibly fascinating, and had made more than one fall a victim to his wiles), laying his hand caressingly on her arm. "What will Miss Newton say when she returns, if she finds I have not amused her friend?"

"Oh! Nothing."

"I am not so sure of that, and—I fear the fair Eugénie."

"You are afraid of Eugénie!" exclaimed Peg in amazement, once more turning her star-like eyes on him.

"Yes, I am, terribly afraid."

"Really?"

"Really!"

"Why?"

"She can say severe and cutting things, Miss Moreland, can your *belle amie*."

"But do you mind that?" she queried.
 "Well, one fellow never likes to incur a lady's displeasure."

"I thought you were too—" And then she stopped and blushed.
 "Too what?" He laughed lightly. "Don't mind my feelings. Be as unkind as you like. I will bear it like a Spartan."

"I—I—wasn't going to be unkind," she murmured in pretty confusion.

"Well then be kind and tell me," he urged.
 "I was going to say, I thought you were too careless to mind what anyone said of you." She acknowledged the pomegranate colour still burning redly on her modest cheek.

"Ho! Ho! Perhaps you are right. I am a careless man. Still there is one person whose opinion I care for, with whom I should like to stand well," and he fastened his bold dark eyes on the fair face, in a fashion which would have disturbed her sorely had she seen it, only Peg was busy with a tress of seaweed that she had plucked up on the shining strand, and which lay caressingly on her little pink palm, and did not see the look fortunately.

"Is that your mother?" she inquired innocently, still busy with the weed.

"No. Bless you, you little angel of innocence," he added under his breath.

Not your mother!" and again the brown orb sought his in surprise for a brief moment.

"No."

"Oh! If my mother were living, there is no one's opinion I should prize like hers."

"Probably not, and I feel the same. Only, I lost my mother when I was little more than a baby, had she lived I might now be a better fellow than I am," and across the handsome, devil-me-care face fell a softening shadow, at the memory of that angel which had smiled on him for a brief while.

"Ah, you have lost your mother too. Then you know what a bitter grief it is to be motherless," and involuntarily she put out her hand with a sympathizing gesture, and he, nothing loth, took it between both his, and held it longer than was at all necessary, and so closely, that she had some difficulty in withdrawing it from his clasp, which she did at last, covered with blushes.

"It is a bitter grief," he said, after a pause, "yet other interests, other affections, come to brighten a man's life."

"Nothing like the mother love," she sighed, thinking of the grim Miss Gregory, who had so badly performed her duty to the penniless orphan left in her charge.

"What about a wife's?" he queried, bending down to look into the shy eyes.

"I—I don't know," she replied, rising her usual formula when at a loss or embarrassed.

"You will some day," he told her. "You will brighten some lucky fellow's life."

"I don't think so. I have no money," she rejoined, naively.

"Your face is your fortune," he told her boldly. "What man could want more?"

"Please don't," she exclaimed, covered with confusion, for she was quite unused to compliments from masculine lips, or from any lips at all, except a few stray exclamations from "Smithy," when she occasionally helped her to don a done up dress.

"Well, I won't if you don't like it," he said, with easy good nature. "Tell me all about yourself. Your name is so familiar to me. When I was quite a young fellow I met an artist at Milan whose name was Moreland, I wonder was he any relation of yours?"

"My father I should think," said Peg, quietly. "He was an artist, and I was born at Milan."

"By Jove! were you though," exclaimed Tyson, his face taking an eager, expectant expression. "My friend was called Paul, and he was son to a very big swell, Sir Roger Moreland, of Adeane Place, in Cresshire."

"Sir Roger was my grandfather," said Peg, steadily, though a bright red spot burnt furiously on either cheek, for the girl always felt bitterly the neglect and contempt with

which she had been treated by her grand relatives.

"Really? How extraordinary!" exclaimed Tyson, with one of his brilliant smiles, an insatiable look in his eyes, a blending of uncertainty and triumph, for it suddenly occurred to him that this lovely little school-girl might be game worth stalking if she were actually granddaughter to the wealthy chateau of Adeane Place, "our meeting thus. Do you know, it is not many months since I was at Adeane Place."

"Were you?" she exclaimed, in astonishment, for she had always been eager to learn anything about the magnificent home from which her father had been exiled for dear love's sake, and which she knew she was never likely to set eyes on.

"Yes, Lady Moreland invited me there." He did not add that she had paid him along with several others to amuse her guests by singing.

"And you went?" her big eyes fixed earnestly on him.

"And I went."

"What—what is she like?" faltered Peg, forgetting in her eagerness to hear something of her grandmother, that she was letting this stranger know that she had never seen her.

"She is tall and very stately, with the remains of great beauty, and as proud, well, about as proud as Lucifer, if you know how proud that is!"

"I can guess," she said, sadly, "from what my mother told me. She must be haughty and—old."

"Yes, she can freeze if she likes by a look! How is it you have never seen her, Miss Moreland?" and then by a series of cleverly put questions, the wily fellow drew all poor Peg's pitiful story from her.

Learnt that she was "heir presumptive" to Adeane Place and all the vast revenues that went with it, that only one frail life stood between her and the probable possession of great wealth; for naturally, he thought, if Roger Delaware, her cousin died, Lady Moreland failing any nearer heir, would leave her money to this desolate little girl, her only son's only child.

It was a reasonable deduction, only Tom Tyson did not know Lady Moreland well, or the cruel capabilities of her flirty heart, and so he set himself to work that brilliant summer's day to win the regard of this scion of an aristocratic house, and when he had learnt all he wanted to know, all, in fact, she had to tell, he abruptly changed the subject by asking her if he should sing to her.

"Do you sing?" she queried, in a little surprise.

"Do I sing!" he echoed, throwing back his head with a ringing laugh. "Why it is by singing that I live. If it were not for that bird in my throat I think I should starve, for I am not the sort of fellow to work hard, or quill drive all day for a mere pittance. Singing is my profession, Miss Moreland, and my bread and by-ster."

"Then do please sing something for me!" she cried with more animation than she had hitherto shown. "I am so fond of it, and I so very seldom hear any. Sometimes do you know I stand outside the Cathedral and listen to the beautiful strains issuing forth."

"Does Madame allow that?" he smiled.

"Oh, no. We stop when we are out with Miss Smith, she is good-natured and doesn't mind."

"I see," and he made a mental note of Miss Smith and her good nature, and then he began to sing some passionate words of Swinburne's, set to a lovely melody that rose and fell and throbbled on the warm summer air like heavenly music, and held the listening girl spell-bound.

"For my heart is set,
 On what hurts me, I wot not why,
 But cannot forget."

What I love what I sing for and sigh,

So sweet, if I durst not pray to you,
 Then were I dead,
 If I sang not a little to say to you,
 (Could it be said)
 Oh, my love, how my heart would be fed;
 Ah, sweet, who has hold of my heart,
 For thy love's sake I live,
 Do but tell me, ere either depart,
 What a lover may give
 For a woman so fair as thou art."

He had a wonderful voice, a robust tenor, and it was evident that it had been cultivated to the fullest extent. It was musical and melodious to a degree, and he uttered the words with such fervour and tone that Peg felt every pulse in her body thrill with responsive delight as he meant they should.

Hadn't he over and over again tried the effect of those wonderful tones on far maturer woman than Peg, and hadn't they rendered at discretion, or, to speak more correctly, without discretion, and wasn't he sure a little unformed girl, such as this would be quite overcome? Of course he was, and he was quite prepared for the sigh that broke from between the parted red lips when he ceased, and her exclamation,—

"Oh, that was heavenly!"

"Did you like it?" he smiled, leaning on his elbow, and looking up into the fair young face above him.

"So much! I could listen to it for ever."

"I wish you would," he said, with half-jesting audacity. "I should never get tired of singing to you, and remember, Miss Moreland," laying a hand lightly on her bare wrist, "that I will always sing for you, whenever you wish to ask me."

"Oh, thanks, that will be delightful!" she exclaimed with those sweet, passionate strains still ringing in her ears, not thinking how probably few her opportunities for hearing him would be.

"Say, now, Tom, sing again for me?" he urged, his dark compelling eyes on her face.

For a minute she hesitated. Then her great love for music, her intense desire to listen once more to his grand notes overcame her shyness.

"Tom, please, sing again for me," she murmured, blushing furiously the while to his intense delight. Without losing the trembling hand he held he began "To Althea."

"When love with unconfin'd wings,
 Hovers within my gates,
 And my divine Althea brings
 To whisper at my gates;
 When I lie tangled in her hair,
 And fetter'd to her eye,
 The birds that wanton in the air,
 Know no such liberty."

He sang this with point and meaning, pressing her hand now and then when he wished to emphasize any particular part, and she listened as one in a dream, forgetful that time was speeding on with winged feet, and that Nemesis in the shape of Madame might seize her.

At last when he stopped, declaring smilingly, that she had tired him out, she suddenly awoke to the fact that it must be late.

"I must go," she cried, a terrified look crossing her face, as she sprang to her feet. "It is time we were back at the school. What will Madame say?"

"Never mind about the griffin," he laughed. "Don't spoil our afternoon's enjoyment."

"Oh, I must. I go!" she said, and at once began to walk swiftly towards Beauté, while he, seeing she was determined, got up and followed her, having to exert himself to come up with her.

They found Eugénie and Verr waiting for them by the picturesque boat-house on the beach, he smoking with his hands tucked into his pockets, she digging holes in the silvery sand with her chiffon-bedecked parasol, and neither of them looking well pleased with themselves.

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"What you like," she rejoined with unusual sweetness.

"No; what you like, *ma belle*."

"We are in love's land to-day;
Where shall we go?
Love, shall we start or stay,
Or sail or row?
There's many a wind and way,
And never a May but May.
We are in love's land to-day;
Where shall we go?"

he quoted.

"I did not know you were poetical," she said, looking at him and smiling a little.

"Neither did I, until lately. You see, love can make a man do anything!"

"Oh! love, love, love!" she exclaimed, with an affection of petulance, "how you harp upon that one string."

"Naturally, when I am with you," he retorted, coolly. "You inspire the theme."

"Oh, rubbish," she said, quickly, for it struck her his lordship was more in earnest than he had hitherto been, and meant business, and it was not her game to allow him to propose just at once.

She wished first to receive an answer to an epistle she had despatched to England to some friends who knew the Varrs, and who would be able to tell her all about them, and until she received the answer she was not anxious for him to propose.

Her acceptance of his proposal would depend entirely upon his actual social position and the length of his purse.

The fair Eugénie had not the slightest intention in the world of bestowing her hand upon her admirer unless he proved to be a Simon Pure, an aristocrat, and, moreover, a wealthy one.

"It is a fact."

"Be sensible, and don't talk nonsense," she said, loftily, and her tone and manner were so very uncompromising that the young man felt snubbed *pro tempore*, and wisely changed the subject, suggesting that they should go for a row or a sail, a suggestion at which Miss Newton caught eagerly, but which filled Peg with horror, for she was by no means a good sailor, and shrank from the prospect of tossing about on the ocean's wide bosom.

However, Eugénie was set on going for a sail, and together the four bent their steps towards the beach, where, after some discussion between the girls, and a flat refusal on the part of Peg to trust herself in the light and unsafe-looking craft Varr chose, he and Eugénie sailed off, leaving Tyson and Peg alone together, side by side on the silvery sands, each grain of which glittered like precious metal in the brilliant sunrays, she looking distressed and embarrassed, he delighted and content.

"Will you please go away and leave me alone?" she said, desperately, after a minute's pause, raising a pair of lovely beseeching eyes to his.

"I really cannot do that," he replied, quietly.

"Please do," she urged, almost tearfully. "Sorry to refuse a lady's request, but Miss Newton has left you in my charge, and I must do my best to amuse you until our friends return."

"But," she faltered, "if—if Madame should see us."

"No fear of that," he replied, confidently.

"Let us walk along the beach to the *Saints Croix*. You know what a lovely little secluded spot it is. No one will see us there, except the gulls and shorelarks, and you won't mind them?" with a look of inquiry, and something more straight into her upraised orbs.

"Oh, no. It is a lonely spot."

"Then come to it. It will be a veritable earthly paradise on such a day as this."

And after a while, Peg allowed herself to be persuaded against her better judgment, and paced beside him over the silvery strand until they came to a sort of ohine or ooze, which was a mass of verdure—verdure which climbed up the slope right away to the brow of the cliff, from the summit of which rippled down a miniature cascade of sparkling diamond-bright water, that when it reached the level, tripped over mossy boulders and silvery strand with a gentle gurgling noise, that harmonised with the "clear, keen joyance" of the wild birds as they warbled their joyous lays, the hum and murmur of myriad insects stirred into life and vigour by the bright sunshine, which stole in tiny shafts here and there through the thick leafage, gilding the countless varieties of grass and ferns with its golden rays, and the whispering of the sea as it lapped the strand with monotonous regularity.

Above, over the softly blue sky light vaporous clouds were floating towards the west, towards a broad band of orange and amber light, above which was a streak of rosy cloud, and then a blaze of gold which showed it was the throne of King Sol.

CHAPTER IV.

"Let us sit here," said Tyson, throwing himself on a soft bed of moss that was heaped in velvety masses round the foot of a great tree that spread out its giant branches till they almost touched the surging waters, and the pebble and weed strewn strand.

"Come," as she hesitated, and stretching up his hand he drew her gently down beside him. "Now," as she yielded to his touch, and sank down with that easy grace of movement, which was not her least charm, on the mossy couch, "what shall I do to amuse you?"

Peg looked at him with those shy lovely brown eyes of hers, that had the power to make his volatile heart beat quicker, but all she said was, "I don't know."

"You must tell me," he smiled (Tom Tyson smiled upon every possible occasion when he was with a woman, for he knew his smile was irresistibly fascinating, and had made more than one fall a victim to his wiles), laying his hand caressingly on her arm. "What will Miss Newton say when she returns, if she finds I have not amused her friend?"

"Oh! Nothing."

"I am not so sure of that, and—I fear the fair Eugénie."

"You are afraid of Eugénie!" exclaimed Peg in amazement, once more turning her star-like eyes on him.

"Yes, I am, terribly afraid."

"Really?"

"Really!"

"Why?"

"She can say severe and cutting things, Miss Moreland, can your *belle amie*."

"But do you mind that?" she queried.
 "Well, one fellow never likes to incur a lady's displeasure."

"I thought you were too—" And then she stopped and blushed.
 "Too what?" He laughed lightly. "Don't mind my feelings. Be as unkind as you like. I will bear it like a Spartan."

"I—I—wasn't going to be unkind," she murmured in pretty confusion.

"Well then be kind and tell me," he urged.

"I was going to say, I thought you were too careless to mind what anyone said of you." She acknowledged the pomegranate colour still burning redly on her modest cheek.

"Ho! Ha! Perhaps you are right. I am a careless man. Still there is one person whose opinion I care for, with whom I should like to stand well," and he fastened his bold dark eyes on the fair face, in a fashion which would have disturbed her sorely had she seen it, only Peg was busy with a tress of seaweed that she had plucked up on the shining strand, and which lay caressingly on her little pink palm, and did, not see the look fortunately.

"Is that your mother?" she inquired innocently, still busy with the weed.

"No. Bless you, you little angel of innocence," he added under his breath.

"Not your mother!" and again the brown orb sought his in surprise for a brief moment.
 "No."

"Oh! If my mother were living, there is no one's opinion I should prize like hers."

"Probably not, and I feel the same. Only, I lost my mother when I was little more than a baby, had she lived I might now be a better fellow than I am," and across the handsome, devil-ma-care face fell a softening shadow, at the memory of that angel which had smiled on him for a brief while.

"Ah, you have lost your mother too. Then you know what a bitter grief it is to be motherless," and involuntarily she put out her hand with a sympathizing gesture, and he, nothing loth, took it between both his, and held it longer than was at all necessary, and so closely, that she had some difficulty in withdrawing it from his clasp, which she did at last, covered with blushes.

"It is a bitter grief," he said, after a pause, "yet other interests, other affections, come to brighten a man's life."

"Nothing like the mother-love," she sighed, thinking of the grim Miss Gregory, who had so badly performed her duty to the penniless orphan left in her charge.

"What about a wife?" he queried, bending down to look into the shy eyes.

"I—I don't know," she replied, rising her usual formula when at a loss or embarrassed.
 "You will some day," he told her. "You will brighten some lucky fellow's life."

"I don't think so. I have no money," she rejoined, naively.

"Your face is your fortune," he told her boldly. "What man could want more?"

"Please don't," she exclaimed, covered with confusion, for she was quite unused to compliments from masculine lips, or from any lips at all, except a few stray exclamations from "Smithy," when she occasionally helped her to don a done up dress.

"Well, I won't if you don't like it," he said, with easy good nature. "Tell me all about yourself. Your name is so familiar to me. When I was quite a young fellow I met an artist at Milan whose name was Moreland, I wonder was he any relation of yours?"

"My father I should think," said Peg, quietly. "He was an artist, and I was born at Milan."

"By Jove! were you though," exclaimed Tyson, his face taking an eager, expectant expression. "My friend was called Paul, and he was son to a very big swell, Sir Roger Moreland, of Adeane Place, in Cresshire."

"Sir Roger was my grandfather," said Peg, steadily, though a bright red spot burnt furiously on either cheek, for the girl always felt bitterly the neglect and contempt with

which she had been treated by her grand relatives.

"Really? How extraordinary!" exclaimed Tyson, with one of his brilliant smiles, an inscrutable look in his eyes, a blending of uncertainty and triumph, for it suddenly occurred to him that this lovely little school-girl might be game worth stalking if she were actually granddaughter to the wealthy chateau-laine of Adeane Place, "our meeting thus. Do you know, it is not many months since I was at Adeane Place."

"Were you?" she exclaimed, in astonishment, for she had always been eager to learn anything about the magnificent home from which her father had been exiled for dear love's sake, and which she knew she was never likely to set eyes on.

"Yes, Lady Moreland invited me there."

He did not add that she had paid him along with several others to amuse her guests by singing.

"And you went?" her big eyes fixed earnestly on him.

"And I went."

"What—what is she like?" faltered Peg, forgetting in her eagerness to hear something of her grandmother, that she was letting this stranger know that she had never seen her.

"She is tall and very stately, with the remains of great beauty, and as proud, well, about as proud as Lucifer, if you know how proud that is!"

"I can guess," she said, sadly, "from what my mother told me. She must be haughty and—cold."

"Yes, she can freeze if she likes by a look! How is it you have never seen her, Miss Moreland?" and then by a series of cleverly put questions, the wily fellow drew all poor Peg's pitiful story from her.

Learnt that she was "her presumptive" to Adeane Place and all the vast revenues that went with it, that only one frail life stood between her and the probable possession great wealth; for naturally, he thought, if Roger Delaware, her cousin died, Lady Moreland failing any nearer heir, would leave her money to this desolate little girl, her only son's only child.

It was a reasonable deduction, only Tom Tyson did not know Lady Moreland well, or the cruel capabilities of her fiery heart, and so he set himself to work that brilliant summer's day to win the regard of this son of an aristocratic house, and when he had learnt all he wanted to know, all, in fact, she had to tell, he abruptly changed the subject by asking her if he should sing to her.

"Do you sing?" she queried, in a little surprise.

"Do I sing!" he echoed, throwing back his head with a ringing laugh. "Why it is by singing that I live. If it were not for that bird in my throat I think I should starve, for I am not the sort of fellow to work hard, or quill drive all day for a mere pittance. Singing is my profession, Miss Moreland, and my bread-and-butter."

"Then do please sing something for me!" she cried with more animation than she had hitherto shown. "I am so fond of it, and I so very seldom hear any. Sometimes do you know I stand outside the Cathedral and listen to the beautiful strains issuing forth."

"Does Madame allow that?" he smiled.

"Oh, no. We stop when we are out with Miss Smith, she is good-natured and doesn't mind."

"I see," and he made a mental note of Miss Smith and her good nature, and then he began to sing some passionate words of Swinburne's, set to a lovely melody that rose and fell and throbbled on the warm summer air like heavenly music, and held the listening girl spell-bound.

"For my heart is set,
 On what hurts me, I wot not why,
 But cannot forget.
 What I love what I sing for and sigh,

So sweet, if I durst not pray to you,

Then were I dead,

If I sang not a little to say to you,

(Could it be said)

Oh, my love, how my heart would be fed;

Ah, sweet, who has hold of my heart,

For thy love's sake I live,

Do but tell me, ere either depart,

What a lover may give

For a woman so fair as thou art."

He had a wonderful voice, a robust tenor, and it was evident that it had been cultivated to the fullest extent. It was musical and melodious to a degree, and he uttered the words with such fervour and tone that Peg felt every pulse in her body thrill with responsive delight as he meant they should.

Hadn't he over and over again tried the effect of those wonderful tones on far maturer woman than Peg, and hadn't they surrendered at discretion, or, to speak more correctly, without discretion, and wasn't he sure a little unformed girl, such as this would be quite overcome? Of course he was, and he was quite prepared for the sigh that broke from between the parted red lips when he ceased, and her exclamation,—

"Oh, that was heavenly!"

"Did you like it?" she smiled, leaning on his elbow, and looking up into the fair young face above him.

"So much! I could listen to it for ever."

"I wish you would," he said, with half-jesting audacity. "I should never get tired of singing to you, and remember, Miss Moreland," laying a hand lightly on her bare wrist, "that I will always sing for you, whenever you wish to ask me."

"Oh, thanks, that will be delightful!" she exclaimed with those sweet, passionate strains still ringing in her ears, not thinking how probably few her opportunities for hearing him would be.

"Say, now, Tom, sing again for me?" he urged, his dark compelling eyes on her face.

For a minute she hesitated. Then her great love for music, her intense desire to listen once more to his grand notes overcame her shyness.

"Tom, please, sing again for me," she murmured, blushing furiously the while to his intense delight. Without losing the trembling hand he held he began "To Althea."

"When love with unconfeined wings,
 Hovers within my gates,
 And my divine Althea brings
 To whisper at my gates;
 When I lie tangled in her hair,
 And fetter'd to her eye,
 The birds that wanton in the air,
 Know no such liberty."

He sang this with point and meaning, pressing her hand now and then when he wished to emphasize any particular part, and she listened as one in a dream, forgetful that time was speeding on with winged feet, and that Nemesis in the shape of Madame might seize her.

At last when he stopped, declaring smilingly, that she had tired him out, she suddenly awoke to the fact that it must be late.

"I must go," she cried, a terrified look crossing her face, as she sprang to her feet. "It is time we were back at the school. What will Madame say?"

"Never mind about the griffin," he laughed. "Don't spoil our afternoon's enjoyment."

"Oh, I must. I go!" she said, and at once began to walk swiftly towards Beauté, while he, seeing she was determined, got up and followed her, having to exert himself to come up with her.

They found Eugénie and Varr waiting for them by the picturesque boat-house on the beach, he smoking with his hands tucked into his pockets, she digging holes in the silvery sand with her chiffon-bedecked parasol, and neither of them looking well pleased with themselves.

The fact was he had been prosecuting his suit with considerable ardour, and she had been throwing judicious doses of cold water on his advances, and they had come perilously near quarrelling, a thing neither desired, for he was too much in love to bear the thought of even a difference with her, and she wished to retain this string to her bow until she was sure of his prospects and position.

"So you have come at last!" she said, rather snappishly, as Peg approached, looking it must be allowed, extremely guilty and confused.

"Yes. We walked to St. Croix and back," said Tyson, cheerily, seeing her confusion.

"Took a long time to do it!" sneered Eugénie.

"Yes, we did not hurry ourselves," rejoined Tom, with the utmost coolness. "Hope you enjoyed your sail on the blue waters of the Bay of Biscay."

"Didn't enjoy it at all," rejoined the heiress. "Nasty choppy sea."

"Come, Peg," she added, as she rose from the rock on which she was sitting, "we ought to be in by now."

"Yes, we ought to go at once," agreed Peg, with a hurried look towards the esplanade and high wall looming in the distance which surrounded Madame's ugly white house.

"You must come to Crévins and have some tea first," said Varr, authoritatively, as he too rose and flung away the end of his cigar.

"Oh, we can't," objected the younger girl at once. "We must get in. It is so late. We shall get into trouble."

"May as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb," he laughed. "Come and have some tea, and then you will be fortified to meet and face the dragon."

Peg expostulated, but in vain! Tea was a treat Miss Newton did not often get. It was too dear for Madame to give to the pupils daily. They had it now and then on high days and holidays, but the usual thing was that beverage dear to the French coffee, and so the idea of tea put Miss Newton into quite an amiable frame of mind, and she insisted on going to Crévins, and shortly they found themselves, to Meg's infinite dismay, seated at one of the little marble-topped tables outside the café, sitting very close together, for it was a squeeze for four folk to sit at one of the little tables, and discussing tea served in the English fashion in a large, brown earthenware teapot, and with a plentiful supply of milk and sugar.

Peg was on thorns. Who might not pass and see them and report this flagrant breach of good conduct to Madame? She suffered agonies, though Tyson's soft voice was murmuring sweet speeches in her ear, and she was hardly startled, though every drop of blood in her veins ran cold, when a well-known and awful voice exclaimed,—

"*Mademoiselles que faites vous?*" and a hand closed like iron on her shrinking shoulder.

Madame and her lately-bereaved friend, who was already on the look out for a second spouse, on their return from praying devoutly at Sainte Marie had strolled at the suggestion of the latter up the Rue de la Pompe to take a peep at the pretty things displayed in the shop windows, and behold! displayed at Crévins for all the world of Beauté to see were her two prettiest pupils, and oh! horror of horrors, in the company of two fast-looking and rather remarkable young men.

For a whole minute Madame's wrath rendered her speechless, and then she opened the flood gates of her wrath, and in good French and bad English rated the four culprits soundly.

Varr rose to the occasion grandly, and declared himself the accepted lover and future husband of Miss Newton, a declaration which Eugénie did not dare to refute with Madame's basilisk eyes on her.

Tyson only whispered to Peg that she might command him in any way in the matter, and that he would do anything in the world that she could to help her out of such a scrape.

"Ver well, sare," concluded Madame, loftily. "I will write to Colonel Newton and beseat vat he have to say to his affaire, and den I let you know."

"Very well, that will do," rejoined Varr, coolly, while Tyson ventured to press Peg's hand reassuringly as Madame cried out in loud and commanding tones.—

"*Allons, demoiselles, chez nous,*" and grabbing an arm of each of her pupils, marched them off towards the *Seminaire*.

CHAPTER V.

The days that followed were sad and sorry ones indeed for poor pretty Peg. Of course she was made the scapegoat, of course it was on her shoulders all the blame was laid.

She was penniless, friendless, of little advantage to Madame. Eugénie was rich and influential a lucrative pupil, so the wily French woman chose to pretend to think that Miss Newton had been led into mischief by Miss Moreland, who in her position of governess pupil should have been extra circumspect and careful, and so as an example had to be made as a warning to others, Peg was told she must be expelled, and Madame wrote to Miss Gregory to know what was to be done with the culprit?

Her aunt's letter was short and to the point, she washed her hands of her niece. She would have nothing more to do with such a worthless creature.

From henceforth she must earn her living how she could and where she chose. And a week later the doors of Madame's *Seminaire* shut on Peg, and on a companion in misfortune, poor Miss Smith, who was dismissed because the school had been left in her charge on that fateful day, and she proved herself wholly incompetent of the charge.

The governess had some ten or twelve pounds, Peg a couple of sovereigns, most of which had been forced on her by the girls, who all contributed a mite, all except the false and mean Eugénie, who held her tongue, and let the innocent, friendless girl suffer for her sin.

Peg's heart was full of a burning indignation against Eugénie and her aunt. She was beginning to feel the first "ailings and arrows of outrageous fortune," and to rebel against them hotly.

Miss Smith, with her deeper and more painful experience, took things more quietly, and set about economising their little store of money until they could get something to do.

Her first care was to secure a tiny room at a very moderate rental, and when their few hand-boxes and belongings were deposited there, she drew from Peg by degrees the whole history of the affair, and Tyson's promise to help her, and the name of the hotel where he was staying.

Three nights later, having persuaded Peg, who had a headache, to go to bed about seven o'clock, she stole out quietly and wended her way to the more fashionable part of the town, to the Hotel Belle Isle.

Tyson was in, and looked up with some surprise when the pale, faded, shabbily-dressed woman was ushered into his room.

"What can I do for you?" he inquired, politely, thinking she had come to beg for a few shillings, and putting his hand in his pocket to get the sum.

"You—you—don't know—me," she began, falteringly, naturally shy, and more so in male society.

"No, you are right," he responded, regarding her curiously.

"But—you—do Miss Moreland, Margaret Moreland," she went on, more steadily, gaining courage as she thought of Peg and her wan, wistful, lovely face as she had last seen it.

"Yes, yes," he exclaimed, all eagerness now. "How is she? I do hope it is all right. That Madame Laurent has not punished her severely?"

"She has expelled her!" rejoined the governess.

"And has she left France? Has she gone to her friends in England?"

"Her aunt has repudiated her. She will have nothing more to do with her."

"Good Heavens! you don't mean that!" he cried, genuine concern visible in his face.

"Yes, I do," nodding her drab-coloured head solemnly. "Peg is here at Beauté without a friend in the world save myself, and I am too poor to help her, and only two sovereigns between her and starvation!"

"Oh, this is horrible!" cried Tyson.

"Where is she? Let me go to her at once. I will make her my wife. Poor little darling! I owe her reparation for the mischief I have done. Though Heaven knows I did not mean to harm her!"

"Ah, sir, that is right," said Miss Smith, her face flashing with delight. "That is the only thing that can set matters straight. I cannot help her, dear child. I was governess at the school, and have been dismissed, too, through the affair. Still, I can work; and I am used to hard knocks and rough fare, she, poor child, is too lovely to face the world alone."

"She shall face it as my wife," he said, firmly. "Can I see her to-night?"

"No. Please be careful, Peg is proud, if she thinks I have been to you she will not marry you."

"She comes of a proud family," he said, reflectively. "Well, I will be cautious. Let me know your address, I will come to-morrow to woo and win my wife," and then after some more conversation Miss Smith was escorted home by Tyson, who promised to interest some friends of his at Saint Jacut on her behalf, and the poor faithful creature went to bed with a quieter mind, and slept better than she had for some days.

The next morning she contrived that Peg should don a pretty white dress, and after a somewhat lengthy conversation with their landlady, a fresh-coloured, good-natured Breton, she came and told Peg that they might have the use of Madame Sauvin's sitting-room, and that she could go there at once if she chose, as she (Miss Smith) had to go out to do their marketing.

The girl got up listlessly and went down to the shabby little room, with its tawdry decorations, its cheap coloured prints, its stiff old-fashioned furniture.

Its one window looked out in the street, and she sat for a while gazing with unseeing eyes at the passers-by, then a curious old crocodile attracted her attention, and she got up to look at it, turning her back to the door, which opened just at that minute, and someone entered. She thought it was Miss Smith, and said in that pretty voice of hers, which had such a plaintive ring in it now.

"You have not been long, dear."

"Ah! I should have come sooner had I known where to find you," said a masculine voice, and, turning with a start, she found herself face to face with Tom Tyson.

Tom looking handsomer than ever, and holding out his hands to her; and she, with a little sob of relief, took a step forward and laid hers in his.

"Poor child, so they have been cruel to you," he said, tenderly, as he drew her down beside him on the sofa.

"Yes, very cruel," she murmured, checking the sobs that rose to her lips. "They have all turned against me, even my aunt."

"And this trouble has come on you through me!" he exclaimed regretfully. "Through me, who would willingly have shielded you from all ill and sorrow."

"Not through you," she replied gently, lifting her tear-laden eyes for a moment to his; "through Eugénie Newton."

"Don't name her!" he cried, angrily, "mean, heartless, to let you suffer for her wrong. I only hope Varr will lead her a life when they are married."

"Will she marry him then?"

"Obliged to; can't do anything else. And Peg," grasping her hands tighter, and bending down till his dark passionate face was close to her lovely one, "I think we had better follow their example and get married too. Don't you, dear?"

"Oh, no, no!" she exclaimed, shrinking away from him.

"Do you dislike me so much?" he queried, a little surprised.

"No. Only—only—"

"Only what?"

"You say this because you—you pity me. You would never have asked me to be your wife but for this unfortunate affair."

"You are wrong, Peg, on my honour," he said, earnestly. "I meant to ask you on the first opportunity, for I love you, darling, as I shall never love any other woman, and I want you for my very own, so that no one can ever come between us, ever take you from me, ever rob me of what will be my greatest earthly treasure."

Peg trembled a little at this passionate wooing, and a deep blush crimsoned brow and throat as he passed his arm round her waist and drew her to him.

"Say yes, you love me," he whispered, laying his cheek on hers caressingly.

"You—you—are trying to do what you think is your duty," she murmured, half-articulate, not wishing him to spoil his life on her account, and yet longing to nestle in those strong arms that promised to be a haven of rest from all her trials and troubles.

"No, Peg, you are wrong. I ask you because I love you," he urged earnestly, for the girl's beauty had bewitched him, and, moreover, he did not forget that she was grand-daughter to Lady Moreland, of Adeane Place.

"And—and you will never regret having taken a penniless girl for your wife?" she whispered.

"Never, dearest," and stooping his head, he kissed the quivering red lips, the sweet tear-drenched eyes, the soft hair, the white throat with an intensity of passion that frightened the girl, and made her tremble like a startled dove in the clasp of his arms.

Tyson lost no time, and as soon as everything could be arranged satisfactorily, they were married. Miss Smith being the only person present at the wedding, which was rather a depressing affair for the young bride.

Immediately after, Peg and her husband set out for Brussels, where he had a singing engagement, and Miss Smith to Saint Jacut, where Tyson had obtained her an engagement to a deaf, purblind old lady of his acquaintance, where her duties would be light and her salary a fair one.

She and Peg exchanged promises to write regularly twice a month to each other, and the former was to let Miss Gregory know that her niece existed once a year, in order that she might forward, through Miss Smith, Lady Moreland's sumptuous gift of ten pounds per annum, but she peremptorily requested the governess not to tell her anything about Peg or her movements, as she did not wish to hear anything of such a lost creature.

Miss Smith, fearing to lose Peg the ten pounds, rigidly adhered to Miss Gregory's commands, and so she never learnt that Peg was married, and went down to her grave in ignorance of the fact that her niece was the wedded wife of the man who, all unwittingly, had been the cause of her trouble and expulsion from Madame Laurent's *Seminaire*.

During the next year life flowed along smoothly for Peg, though she discovered, shortly after her marriage, somewhat to her dismay, that she did not love her husband, never would or could do. For though she was grateful to him for rescuing her in the hour of need, yet as the days wore on she grew to know what a shallow, unstable temperament Tom Tyson possessed.

He was naturally idle, only working by fits and starts, not with that steady perseverance which would have gained him a comfortable

competence, and though he was never unkind to her, nor rough, and gave her lavishly when he had the money to give, still he left her a good deal alone, and associated with men, that her instinct told her, were bad companions for him.

She tried at first to influence him for the best, but finding that she made not the slightest impression on his careless nature, and that it was likely to lead to quarrels, she gave it up and let him go his own way, which just suited him.

They had rooms in a third rate hotel at Brussels, and he was fortunate at first in getting engagements. Then came a time when they felt the pinch of poverty severely, to which succeeded a period when he seemed to have more money than he knew what to do with, and then he spent extravagantly.

She remembering bygone days put aside the greater part of what he gave her, and well for her was it that she did so, for one day the garçon came to their sitting-room with a strangely perturbed face, saying that two gentlemen wanted to see M^{lle} Tyson.

Tom, turning a little pale, went out at once, only to return shortly, looking as white as death.

"What is it, dear?" cried Peg, springing up and twining her hands round his arm, while her lovely eyes sought his beseechingly.

"A friend has got into a mess," he said, huskily, "and I must go off at once to France to try and arrange matters."

"Oh, don't leave me here alone, Tom!" she implored.

"Only for a few days, little woman," he said, tenderly. "Don't fret, I will come back as soon as I can. Here take all this, I only want a couple of sovereigns," and he turned out the contents of his pockets on her work-table, some twenty or thirty pounds.

"Must you go?" she queried wistfully.

"I must, dearest, believe me I would not leave you if I could help it," and then, with one passionate loving embrace, he loosed her clinging hands, and passed out of the room.

For a moment the girl stood dazed at the suddenness of his departure, then, with a gasping sob, she tore down the staircase, and reached the door just in time to see him driving off in a hired carriage with two queer-looking men, and she seemed to realize she was alone in the world.

CHAPTER VI.

THE days dragged slowly along. Peg was in a maze of horrible wonder and fear.

Why had her husband left her so suddenly? Who were those strange-looking men? Had he done anything wrong? Would he never come back? Her heart sank within her at the thought, and to turn her thoughts she got pen and paper and wrote a long letter to "Smithy." In two days a reply came, counselling trust and patience, advice which she took, until a whole month elapsed, and then came a letter from one of Tyson's ne'er-do-well friends, telling her that he had been arrested on a charge of forgery, and though not actually the guilty person, had been unable to clear himself, and had been condemned to the *travaux forcés*, at Toulon, for ten years.

The unhappy girl fainted when she read this letter, a swoon from which she did not recover for hours, and when she did she prayed that she might die. The wife of a felon! The penniless, lone wife of a convict! Oh, the horror of it! For two nights she never slept, but lay wide awake, face to face with all the miseries of her position.

Then, on the third, a packet was brought her. It was from Marzial's, the man who had written before, and contained a letter and a newspaper. The former briefly acquainted her with her husband's death, the latter gave a detailed account of how he had tried to escape from the train, which was taking him

and some other convicts to Toulon. How he had fallen in leaping from the carriage, and been crushed to death under the wheels.

Peg did not feel her second blow quite so acutely, perhaps, as she had the first, all her faculties, her capabilities for suffering seemed numbed, deadened. In a dazed kind of way she wrote and told Miss Smith her husband was dead, and then began to collect her belongings and to pay what she owed in Brussels. She felt she could not stay there where she had passed some happy days with him, the dead felon. Yet she did not know what to do, or where to go. There seemed never a corner in all the wide world for her, poor child. However, her doubts and difficulties were resolved by "Smithy."

"Come here at once!" she wrote. "Madame Duvernay, who has the apartment above ours, wants a governess for her little girl of six. I have told her about you, and she is willing to take you; but I have not said anything about your marriage. I thought it better not. So call yourself Miss Moreland, and turn down that page of your life. You must live, and people are so curious. You look so young, no one will think you a widow. Come as soon as you can. I wish I could come and fetch you; but I cannot leave Mrs. Nelson. We shall see each other every day!"

Peg had no choice. She must go to Madame Duvernay's or starve. Her slender stock of money was nearly exhausted. When she had paid up everything, and bought herself a black dress and hat, she had barely five pounds left.

However, that was sufficient to take her to Saint Jacut, and thankful she was to feel "Smithy's" arms around her, and to be received kindly by the widow, who was a placid fat, fair woman of forty, with not more brains than were absolutely necessary, who never saw an inch beyond her nose. Just the kind of person for Peg, as she never asked awkward questions, and took everything for granted.

Life flowed on smoothly, if monotonously, here for Peg for nearly five years, and then Miss Smith, her faithful friend and ally, died suddenly. It was a great blow to Peg, and she mourned her sincerely; but her grief was checked and yet augmented by a letter she received from her aunt about this time, telling her that her other aunt—Lady Delaware was dead, and her boy also, and that she therefore might hope to be recognised shortly by her grandmother.

Miss Gregory's suppositions proved correct. Three months afterwards, Miss Moreland received a visit from Lady Moreland's legal adviser, who came to tell her that she was wanted by her bereaved relative at Adeane Place, to take the place in her affections left vacant by the deaths of her daughter and grandson.

"Lady Moreland desired me to ask if you were free, or if you had engaged yourself to any one here in France?" remarked the lawyer, with a keen glance at Peg's beautiful highbred face.

"I am quite free," rejoined Peg, haughtily, drawing up her slender figure to its full height, and looking Mr. Morton steadily in the eyes.

"Yes, yes, so I suppose," he assured her, quickly. "Only, sometimes, you know very beautiful young ladies have lovers, who prove troublesome, and Lady Moreland cannot bear any more worry just now."

"My grandmother need not fear," smiled Peg, bitterly. "I can safely say there is not a person in the world who loves me."

Poor Peg! if she had but known!

"Then there soon will be," said the old man, softly. "Lady Moreland cannot hope to keep you with her always. Someone will come to woo and win you."

"I hope not," she said, shortly, with an involuntary shudder, as she thought of the wooing that had taken place in the Breton's shabby parlour at Beauté and its miserable ending.

"A curious girl," thought the astute lawyer

"and a regular Moreland for pride." Aloud he merely remarked. "It will be a great happiness to Lady Moreland to have you with her, and the sooner you can arrange to come to Eogland the better it will be for all concerned."

"Madame Davenay will make no difficulty about my leaving her, so I can leave France when you think best," said Peg, with a certain amount of indifference.

"Shall we say the day after to-morrow, then?" suggested the man of law, who was anxious to get back to his musty papers and mouldy old ledgers. "If it is not too short a time for you to make your preparations in."

"My preparations will not be very elaborate," rejoined Miss Moreland, with a melancholy little smile. "I could be ready to start to-morrow if you preferred it."

"Could you, really, without inconvenience?" he queried, eagerly.

"Without the slightest inconvenience."

"Then I should prefer it, and so, I am sure, would Lady Moreland."

That night Peg sat up late tearing up old letters, some of which she had received from her dead husband, destroying all mementoes of her past life, and a square paper document she burnt and let smoulder away in the grate till only a few blackened shreds remained.

But still there was the ring. Her wedding-ring—a broad, heavy gold band, which she had worn round her neck slung on a ribbon ever since she left Brussels. What should she do with it? It would be unwise to keep it. Her initials and his, and the date of their marriage was engraved on the inside. It would never do to keep it, and she wished to put aside everything connected with the past, which had not been a too happy one, and start in her new life untrammelled by anything save remembrance, which now and then brought bygone events before her with unpleasant distinctness, notwithstanding her efforts to forget.

As the grey light of early dawn came stealing in through the unshuttered windows an idea occurred to her. From the house she could see the blue waves that fretted and moaned around the base of the tall cliffs. That was the place for the golden shackle that had bound her to a felon. The sea would not reveal her secret, and throwing a cloak over her shoulders she stole out away over the intervening space, and standing on the crest of the cliffs, hurled the gold circlet into the blue waves.

Thus concealing the last trace of her ill-starred marriage she breathed freer as she retraced her steps to the house, and she met Mr. Morton later on in the day with a shade of added hauteur in her manner, a stately reserve which he admired, though at the same time it amused him not a little.

They crossed from Dieppe to Newhaven, Peg having a velvet-lined, luxurious cabin all to herself, and receiving the greatest deference and attention from everyone.

On that journey she began to taste the sweets of wealth and position. Miss Moreland, the heiress, going to her grand relatives' grand place, was a very different person from poor, penniless Peg, the pupil-teacher whom nobody thought much of, and, save for her great and undeniable loveliness, would have been passed over and metaphorically effaced altogether.

It was to be all different now she realised as she sank back on the soft cushions of the splendid carriage sent to meet them at the Trentleek station. She was henceforth to be somebody in the great world instead of nobody, and looked but with veiled eagerness to catch the first glimpse of the old house which had been her father's home and which her dead husband had visited.

Adeane Place had once been an abbey, and about the building were still remains and evidences of its antiquity. A broad drive led up through parklike grounds to the entrance door, and terraces of green, delightfully smooth and pleasant to the eye, led down to

a great lake, on whose placid bosom floated numerous gaily-painted boats.

The abbey was a long, low building, with pinnacled turrets at either end and numerous windows of various types and sizes, while the heavily-clamped, nail-studded oak door was a veritable remnant of feudal times.

To Peg's lively imagination it looked dull and somewhat like a prison, despite its magnificence and grand surroundings, and she shuddered just a little as her eyes fell on it.

"It is more modern and cosy within," remarked Mr. Morton, who had noticed the shudder, with a smile. "It is difficult to make these old places look anything save dungeonlike without; but Lady Moreland's taste is exquisite, and I think you will like the suite of rooms prepared for you."

"I have no doubt I shall," replied the girl, dreamily.

She was fain to admit the air of solid comfort combined with grandeur that prevailed as she followed Mr. Morton and a brace of pink-legged, powder-headed footmen through the great arched entrance hall, where skins of divers wild animals were spread over the floor, polished till it shone like a looking-glass, and the walls hung with helmets, lances, swords, breastplates dented and scarred in many a furious fray, and other warlike weapons, and she wondered a little as they went through an immense drawing-room hung with purple and gold and full of lovely and costly bric-à-brac.

From this they turned abruptly into a smaller room where the walls were panelled shoulder-high with time-blackened oak, and above were rare miniatures, gems of paintings, and valuable china, while on the wide, old-fashioned hearth blazed a steady fire, though outside the autumn day was warm with the sun's glow and radiance.

Beside the fire in a high-backed richly carved chair, sat a haughty looking old lady with hair white as the driven snow, and a brace of somewhat fierce dark eyes that shone from under a pair of ebony brows with peculiar brightness.

She rose as Mr. Morton and Peg were announced, and came forward to meet them, her dead black silk draperies rustling as she moved.

"I have brought your granddaughter, Lady Moreland," said the lawyer, as she greeted him, drawing the girl forward.

"I see, I see!" muttered her ladyship, her keen eyes fastened on Peg's lovely, blushing face. "A regular Moreland, thank heaven! Come, my dear," holding out her arms, "welcome to your home!"

Peg came forward rather slowly, and allowed herself to be embraced, but she offered no caress. She could not forget all at once the long neglect of years, nor the treatment her mother had experienced at this grand-dame's hands, though she tried to subdue all rebellious feelings and be humble and meek.

"There is no mistaking to what race she belongs," went on her ladyship, gleefully, turning to a tall, fair man, who stood lounging near the fire. "Eh, Seymour?"

"No, indeed!" he assented, his blue eyes fixed admiringly on Peg.

"This is your cousin, Seymour Sackville," went on her grandmother. "Your second cousin, and I hope you and he will be good friends, Margaret, for he is a great favourite of mine."

"This is the man she will want me to marry," thought Peg, angrily, and immediately decided to dislike him with all her heart and soul and strength.

"I dare say we shall be when we know each other," she said aloud, as she relinquished her hand reluctantly to his clasp.

"I am sure we shall," he said, warmly, pressing her hand in his, as though to assure her of his friendliness. "You have no other relation I think but myself and Lady Moreland, so I shall make large claims on your affection."

"And I doubt whether your claims will be

entertained," thought Morton, as he saw a shade settle down over Peg's fair face, and a mischievous light burn in those dark orbs that were so like the chatelaine's of Adeane Place.

"I have an aunt, my mother's sister," she said, a little coldly.

"That is the only relation on your mother's side, is it not?" asked Lady Moreland, rather eagerly, for she by no means wanted the Devonshire farming people to come about the old ancestral home, or to lay claim to kinship with the young creature she meant to make her heiress.

"The only one," rejoined Peg, still more coldly.

"That is well," muttered her ladyship, sotto voce. "Now, my child," she went on aloud, quite briskly for her, "I am sure you would like to go to your own room, and have a little rest before dinner. I have not engaged a maid for you yet, as I thought you might like to select an attendant for yourself. In the meantime Simons, my woman, will attend on you," and she struck a silver bell that stood at her elbow. "Send Simons," she commanded, to the sedate individual in funeral black, who answered her imperious summons, and a few minutes later an elderly, pleasant-faced woman appeared in the oak room.

"Simons, take Miss Moreland to her room and attend to all her requirements."

"Yes, my lady," responded the maid.

Peg made no remark as she followed Simons through various rooms and corridors, though the extent of the house and the magnificence of its appointments astonished her. Her own suite of rooms faced south, and from the window there was a grand view of the park, and the lake which lay shimmering like a sheet of molten silver in the moonlight, while the decorations were everything that she could desire. There was a bedroom with the daintiest of pale pink satin and lace draperies, and a toilet-table loaded with lovely silver and ivory brushes, trays, jars, scent bottles, &c. A door led from this into a marble-flagged bath room, and another door into a sitting-room hung with amber, where the furniture was of ebony, and exquisite little pictures decorated the walls, where there was a miniature bookcase, filled to repletion with richly-bound tomes, and a piano, and a work-table inlaid with tortoiseshell and silver, and hundreds of delightful nick-nacks and trifles likely to please a young woman's eye and taste.

Her grandmother's recognition of her had been tardy, but Margaret Moreland recognised at once that the treatment she would receive at her relative's hands would be princely, and she could not control the thrill of exultation that ran through her, as she realised how different her life would be in the future from what it had been in the past.

Simons attended on her deferentially, though Peg, secretly, would much rather have dispensed with her services.

She bathed her face and hands with perfumed waters, she brushed out, and twisted up in a becoming fashion the golden-brown hair. She put the little feet into a pair of fairy-like shoes, and then inquired if Miss Moreland would don the elegant tea-gown of black silk and lace which Lady Moreland had prepared for her, having been able to do so (Mr. Morton having sent by her special request, a very exact description of her granddaughter's height, size, and general appearance), or one of the dresses she had brought from abroad with her?

Peg wisely chose the tea-gown, knowing it would be more in keeping with her surroundings, than the somewhat shabby frocks she had brought from Saint Jaut, and she hardly recognised herself when she surveyed herself in the long cheval glass when her toilet was completed. She looked so much taller and grander than she ever supposed she could look in that perfectly fitting gown, that trained out and added apparently to her stature, and with that one

white rose, nestling cosily amid the piled up puffs and curls of her bright locks.

Lady Moreland gave a sigh of satisfaction and approval as Peg entered the purple drawing room, for she looked high-bred and fair enough to please the most fastidious eye, and it was with something more than approval, that Seymour Sackville regarded this radiantly beautiful cousin whom he had never seen until that day, and whose glance made the blood course through his veins as it had never done before, in all the thirty-five years of his life.

CHAPTER VII.

As the days wore on, Peg, or as her grandmother invariably called her, Margaret, grew in favour with her ladyship.

She showered costly presents on the girl. Silks, laces, jewels, the old family diamonds and opals were brought out and cleaned for her to wear, to decorate that white throat, those rounded arms, that fair brow, on which they shone with such regal splendour, and she wore them as though to the manner born.

There was not a trace of the poor dependent governess about Peg, and Lady Moreland's dark eyes would gleam with delight when the lithe, graceful girl would enter the room, her silken draperies trailing after her with negligent grace, her lovely head held erect, her beautiful face instinct with life and happiness.

For Peg was happy. She got on excellently well with her grandmother, who left not a single wish ungratified, and her days were full of all sorts of congenial employments.

Then there was Seymour Sackville who was an almost daily visitor at the place, and who proved himself a delightful companion.

Kind, attentive, cosily, but not the least bit in the world the lover she had feared he would be.

No, Seymour Sackville was far too diplomatic to show the love that had sprung up in his heart for his fair young cousin. Instinctively he knew his tenure of her favour rested on his preserving that friendly yet perfectly cosily manner. Any warmer advances he felt would be rejected with scorn.

He meant to let time that worker of wonders, do his best for him, and hoped in the future he might gain what was denied him in the present.

It was a secret grief to her ladyship that the cousins did not blossom into lovers at once, for it was the dearest wish of her heart they should marry. They were the last of the race, and she felt she could die happy if she left Peg in her nephew's care. He was so noble, so broad-minded, of such an amiable temper and blameless life, where else could she look for such an admirable guardian of her darling's happiness, for the girl was her darling. The apple of her eye. She had crept into the inmost recesses of the haughty old woman's heart, and was her dearest earthly treasure.

Still, though Lady Moreland ardently desired the marriage, she was too diplomatic to say a word to wayward Peg. Some subtle intuition told her the girl was like herself, proud and ill able to brook control, and so she held her peace and let matters take their own way, only doing all she could to throw Seymour and Peg together. The latter did not ride, but a horse was bought for her, a small, black cob that she called Dot, and Sackville taught her to ride, and then, when she was well proficient, gave her a hunter, a splendid thoroughbred who took hedges and ditches like a bird, and many were the leads he gave his coz over difficult hedges and stiff fences, and soon Peg became known in the county as a bold and fearless rider, and many a fox's brush was hung at her saddle-bow.

This amusement brought the cousins closer together. They were a good deal alone. These were delightful hours when they rode home together in the gloaming, after a hard

day's sport, when their tired horses seldom got beyond a walk, and when they exchanged ideas and were merry and happy together, yet never a word of love, and Peg, with the perversity of woman, was beginning to long to hear tender words fall from his lips to know he cared for her, though she gave no outward sign of that desire.

She was young, life lay before her a sunlit pathway strewn with roses, and this man's love would make it an earthly Paradise.

She was free to love and wed, Margaret's letter had told her that long ago, and why not Seymour, whom she felt she could, nay, did love, as she never had poor Tyson. She realised how great her love for him was when he went up to Scotland to a friends shooting-box for a month. The place seemed terrible dull without him.

Life were quite another aspect, and her grandmother noted with secret satisfaction, that she appeared dull and and restless, did not seem so cars to ride, or sing, or play tennis, or do anything but sit in the garden or park and gaze at the distant hills.

She was sitting under a great oak one day, wistfully staring at the dark outline against the clear sky, when a strong arm stole round her waist, and a voice said close to her ear, "Peg, dear, what are you dreaming about? How I wish it was of me."

With a startled exclamation she turned her head to find Sackville's face close to her own. "Seymour," she murmured, blushing deeply.

"Yes, Seymour," he smiled, looking down at her with those blue eyes that were just the dearest things on all God's earth to her, "are you glad to see him?"

"Yes, very," she told him.

"Then—if you are really glad, don't you think you might welcome me back properly?"

"How?" she queried.

He bent his head a little lower, there was no mistaking the action. They had never kissed before, but in an instant then their lips clung into a long close kiss.

"My love, my wife," he murmured passionately, straining her to him with a force that almost hurt.

"Oh, not that," she exclaimed, a wild startled look in the big brown eyes.

"Why not, dearest?" he queried fondly.

"Lady—Moreland," she stammered, for she often spoke of her grandmother thus.

"Well!"

"She—she—might object."

"Peg," putting his hand under the dimpled chin, and turning up the fair blushing face, "do you love me, or am I mistaken?"

"I love—you, Seymour," she breathed in low tones.

"Then it will give aunt greater pleasure than anything else on earth. It is the dearest wish of her heart that we should marry, only she feared to give you a hint of it, lest it might startle you, and turn you against me."

"Conspirators," she smiled, leaning her head against his broad shoulder.

"Yes, and successful ones. Come, we will go and tell her the good news."

Lady Moreland was delighted, and urged a speedy wedding, to which, after some demur, Peg agreed. Perhaps it was the skeleton in the cupboard that made her hesitate. The thought of that turned down page in her life, of which no one living, she told herself, knew. Sackville never doubted but that he was her first and only love, and asked no questions, and she cared for him so much she feared to lose him if she told him all. He loved her, he would be unhappy without her, there might be a hitch, so she married him without telling him one word of that marriage at Beau's, or of the dead felon.

After a brief honeymoon, they returned to Adeans Place, and then commenced a life for Peg, so full of perfect happiness that she wondered before how she could have existed.

She laid the ghost of the old life, the old love by an effort of her strong will, and gave herself up to the delight of the present, which

culminated a year later, when a son was born to them, a little heir to all Lady Moreland's vast possessions.

How happy they were—the husband and wife, and the stately grandmother, who would have had a golden cot made for the babe had she been permitted, only Seymour would not hear of such nonsensical extravagance.

Life seemed a poem to Peg. There was not a crumple in her rose leaf, not a cloud on the cerulean sky, and then, suddenly, the thunder-bolt fell, and misery and desolation overtook and overwhelmed her.

She was walking in the park late one autumn afternoon alone, when the sound of a hurried step behind her caused her to look round, and she came face to face with a man. A man, the sight of whose face made every drop of blood in her body rush back to her heart and froze her as she stood there.

"My Heaven!" she gasped. "Can the dead live again?"

"I am not dead, never was. Don't think I'm a ghost," rejoined Tyson, for it was he.

"Then—then why, oh why did your friend send me that letter and paper?" she asked, with ashy, trembling lips.

"They made a mistake, that was all," he rejoined coolly. "The fellow who jumped from the train and was smashed was named Dyson, and they chose to put it Tyson, don't you see. I couldn't help it, could I?"

"Oh! cruel, cruel fate!" she moaned, wringing her hands. "I am no wife—and my darling boy! Oh! I shall die!"

"Now, Peg, don't be a fool," said Tyson, abruptly; "and don't imagine, pray, for one instant, that I want you to leave your swell husband. Nothing of the sort, my dear. You married him, thinking I was dead, and your welcome, as far as I am concerned, to stay with him till death parts you, only I'm hard up, Peg—devilish hard up. I haven't a sou in the world, and I've come to you to help me. I want you to give me money to make a start in Australia, and I'll never trouble you again. I've suffered these ten years for another man's sin." And looking at him, the miserable woman, who was his wife, saw that he had, both bodily and mentally, that decade at the *travaux* forces had done its worst on him, brutalized and lowered his nature. "And it's been a weary time. I wouldn't have come to disturb your happiness, Peg, for I love you still, if I could have helped it, only a man must think of himself first. I am starving, and likely to starve in this country. You are rolling in wealth, and you must give me some of your plenty to make a fresh start in a new country, and neither you nor any one else shall ever hear of Tom Tyson again. I'll call myself Bill Smith, or Jack Jones, and you can remain with your husband, and no one ever be any the wiser."

She shuddered a little. Her husband! To which did she belong she wondered vaguely?

"Well, Peg, will you help me?" he demanded, after a long pause.

"How much do you want?" she asked, in faint, hollow tones.

"Five hundred pounds. Is that too much?"

"No. You shall have it. Here is all I have with me," emptying the contents of her purse, some ten or twelve pounds, into his outstretched hand. "The sum you ask for I will send to any address you name."

He gave her one in a low part of London. "Good-bye, and Heaven bless you and the little one," he said, with some emotion. "Though you are my wife, I won't ask to touch your hand. I'll just kiss the hem of your garment," and kneeling he lifted her gown to his lips, and then rising, turned and strode away through the gloom of the autumn night.

Peg stood like a statue for a long while, and then staggered unsteadily homeward.

One thought beat like a sledge hammer

in her poor dazed brain, she must tell Seymour all, and then she must leave him and her boy!

She went straight to the library. She knew she would find him there at that hour, and looking the door carefully, she crossed the room and stood beside him.

"Well, my darling," he said, looking up with a fond smile, "what is it?" and he stretched out his arms to take her in them.

"Don't touch me," she cried, in harsh, dissonant tones, stepping backwards. "You have no right to!"

"Good heavens! Peg, what is the matter?" he exclaimed, springing up at her strange words, and staring helplessly at her ghastly face.

"I must go away from here. I must leave you!"

"Peg! are you mad?" he cried.

"Not yet. But I hope I shall be soon," she rejoined, desperately. "Stand there Seymour Sackville, and let me kneel at your feet and tell you my miserable story," and kneeling there she told him all.

"You cannot leave me. I cannot let you go!" he groaned, when she stopped.

"There is no other course for me to pursue."

"You could leave me and the boy?" he queried, heartbrokenly.

"What can I do? what can I do?" she wailed. "I am not your wife but his. How can I stay with you?"

"We will buy his silence," whispered Sackville, "and you shall still be happy."

"You do not know what you say," she rejoined, sorrowfully. "When the morning comes you will think as I do, and see that we must separate," and turning away she went up to her own room to battle alone with her terrible anguish, while he she loved better than her life, struggled for the mastery between right and inclination in the room below.

The battle was not fought out or won when the grey light of the early dawn began to steal through the unshuttered windows, and then Sackville was summoned.

His gamekeepers wanted him. There had been a fray with poachers in the woods, and one was shot dead. He was lying at the gate lodge, and Sackville went down to see him, more to distract his thoughts than for any other reason.

The dead man was handsome, and he saw at a glance that he was no common poacher. He bent over him with eager curiosity and as he did so he saw tattooed on his left arm T. T. for a moment his senses reeled, then making some excuse he tore up to the Place, and imperiously demanded Peg to admit him to her room.

"Come with me," he said, briefly, and she, without a word, followed him.

The lodge was deserted save for that ghastly, rigid form covered with a sheet. Sackville drew it from the still face, Peg gazed at it with dilated eyes.

"Is that the man?" queried Sackville.

"That is the man," she answered, stonely.

Then they walked back in silence; but when she reached her room she swayed and fell forwards prone along the floor, and lay white and still as the corpse at the lodge.

For many weeks poor Peg hovered between life and death, and then came a joyful day when she was declared out of danger. A month later Sackville took her away quite alone, without a maid, or the boy and his nurse, to Lady Moreland's great indignation, and they were quietly married in a large busy town, returning shortly after to the Place, where after a while Peg's roses bloomed once again in the wan cheeks, and the smiles revisited the wistful lips, but still she was never quite the same Peg again as she was before she met Tyson in the park.

Perhaps the knowledge of their secret weighed heavily on her, and though dearly loved by her husband, and surrounded by beautiful children, she is haunted now and then by a ghost she cannot lay, which stalks out from the unforgettable past and confronts her.

[THE END.]

FACETIÆ.

FIRST DAMSEL: "But I thought he said he would never speak to you again." Second Damsel: "Oh, yes; but he saw I had a cold, and he couldn't resist the temptation to tell me of a sure cure."

He: "I say, what would you do if a fellow said he would take a kiss without your permission?" She: "I should refuse it, of course." He: "What the kiss?" She: "Oh, no—the permission."

"Your husband," said the caller, sympathizingly, "was a man of many excellent qualities." "Yes," sighed the widow, "he was a good man. Everybody says so. I wasn't much acquainted with him myself. He belonged to six lodges."

A MISAPPREHENSION: "You are getting to be very fond of coffee, Mr. Hunker," said Mrs. Small, to her star boarder, as he passed his cup for a third replenishing. "It isn't that, Mrs. Small," replied the boarder, "I'm taking the hot water treatment."

SAID THE FIRST LITTLE BIRD: "Here comes a boy with a gun. Shall we fly away?" Second little bird: "No; he'd only follow us." "But what shall we do?" "Sit here and let him fire at us. By-and-by he will shoot off a finger or something and then go home."

JOHNNIE CHAFFIE: "I know whose coming to-night." Miss Chaffie: "Who?" "Jim." "How do you know?" "I saw you take his photograph out of the album and put it on the mantelpiece, and you put Fred's out of sight until Saturday evenings."

MISS ANTIQUE: "No, I'm not going to Mrs. Whitehair's reception." Miss Budd: "Why not?" "Oh, she always talks about old times, and that makes me tired. I don't see how you can stand her." "But, my dear, her subject is new to most of us, you know."

AN every-day soldier is walking proudly down the street, arm-in-arm with his young woman, when he runs suddenly against his sergeant. He introduces his girl very respectfully to his superior officer. "My sister, sergeant." The Sergeant: "That's all right, my boy. She used to be mine, too."

THERE are some persons who cannot take a joke, but Brown is not one of them. One of the boys acquainted with Brown's frequent change of abode asked him which he thought was the cheaper, to move or pay rent. "I can't tell you, my dear boy," replied Brown; "I have always moved."

JOHNNY: "Does it follow because a man wears glasses he has bad eyesight?" Popper: "As a rule, Johnny." Johnny: "Then you must have awful poor eyesight." Popper: "Oh, no, sonny." Johnny: "Then why did mamma say you look through ten glasses a day?" Popper: "I'll explain it to mamma to night."

SOLICITOUS SPOUSE: "What makes you so worried lately? You're not like yourself." Great Lawyer: "Well, I'm having considerable trouble down town." "Now you must tell me all about it." "Well, you see, I want to keep the office open till five, and the office boy wants to close at four, and we can't seem to arrange matters."

TRAVELLER (to driver of Isle of Man hackney coach): "You have a pretty large cemetery here." Driver: "Yes, they are all deaf and dumb folk buried in it too." "Dear me! what a number of the inhabitants must have been afflicted in that way!" "Well, you see, sir, we don't reckon to bury 'em hereabouts while they can hear and speak."

THE other day a physician was questioning a man who was thought to be insane. "Do you ever have any illusions?" he asked. "What are they?" asked the man. "Why," explained the physician, "do you ever hear voices?" "Oh, yes," replied the man. "When?" "Whenever some one talks to me," was the entirely sane reply.

WEARY CLERK (after cutting off twenty-five samples of dress goods): "Is that all, madam?" Miss Grabbe: "Um—I would like one more sample. My mother is so particular. Cut me off a piece from that roll under your hand." Little Sister (loudly): "Why, Moll, that won't do at all. Mother said she wasn't going to have any blue in that crazy quilt, 'cause it always fades."

WAGG: "I want some eternity." Clerk: "Some what?" "Some eternity for the lining of a coat." "We haven't any such thing as you ask for, but we have some excellent lasting for coat lining." "Well, that's just what I asked for." "Pardon me; I didn't know what you meant, but you certainly asked for eternity." "Well, if eternity isn't lasting, I'd like to know what is?"

A PROMINENT Scotch M.P. was not complimented lately when he was addressing his constituents. He assured his hearers that he was not an idle member of the House, and that during the last two years he had put no less than 182 questions to the Speaker and the members of the Government. "What an ignorant auld beggar ye must be!" cried a voice from the crowd.

OMNIBUS DRIVER (to quiet stranger in suburban road): "Hi! mister, jest hold that there horse's head for a minute while I get down, will yer?" Stranger (nervously): "Wh-wh-which one?" "Why, the off'un, to be sure." "My good man, I am totally unacquainted with horses, and it is quite impossible for me to tell which o' your animals is an orphan."

MERELY FOR GOING ON.

There's the woman with the mission, and the woman with the fad,

Who makes the chap that marries her wish that he never had;

But the most outrageous product of this freak-infested age

Is the woman with a genius for going on the stage.

RODNEY BATES is a sportsman of more enthusiasm than experience. He had good luck one day last summer while fishing up in the Maine woods, and his joy overflowed in a telegram to his wife like this: "I've got one. Weighs seven pounds, and is a beauty." In reply came the following, signed by Mrs. Bates: "So have I. Weighs ten pounds. He isn't a beauty. Looks like you." It was more than ten words, but Rodney forgave her.

MR. FLEISZIG wanted to leave the city by the last train, and not knowing when it left, sent his servant to see, saying, "John, go down to the depot and see when the last train goes, and hurry back and tell me." John went off, and did not return for more than two hours, when he rushed back into the room all out of breath. "Where in the world have you been all this time?" demanded his master. "Train just left, sir—this very minute," was John's broken reply.

A MASTERLY HINT.—It was in the early days of California. A friendly game was in progress, and one of the players was rendered noticeable by the loss of an eye. The game progressed quietly for some time, but the luck was very one-sided until one of the gentlemen interested drew his pistol and placed it on the table. "Somebody's cheating," he remarked, "cheatin' all the game. I don't mention no names, but if that cheatin' don't stop, whoever it is will lose his other eye."

BY INVITATION.—"Why didn't you come home to dinner?" Small Son: "I had my dinner, ma. I took dinner with Willie Minks." "Did Mrs. Minks invite you?" "Yes, ma. I smelled apple dumplings cooking, and I told her I liked apple dumplings awful." "Oh, you did?" "Yes'm. Then she said maybe if I went home I'd find you had apple dumplings for dinner, too." "Humph!" "Yes'm. But I told her yours was always so heavy pa wouldn't let me eat any, an' then she invited me to sit down."

SOCIETY.

CELERY in a vase is now obsolete. Serve it on a flat glass dish.

THE Queen's granddaughters outnumber Her Majesty's grandsons by almost three to one.

WITHIN the next few months Prince George of Wales will take his seat in the House of Lords as Duke of Kent.

SILK is once more to be generally worn, either in a complete gown, or in combination with cloth.

THE Grand Duchess Stéphanie of Austria will join the ever-increasing ranks of royal authors before the year is out. The publication of her profusely illustrated volume, entitled "Travels in the Tyrol," is expected.

THE Marquis of Salisbury's second title is Earl of Salisbury, so that, to prevent confusion, his eldest son takes the third, which is Viscount Cranborne.

LINEN collars and cuffs are worn with tailor-made suits. The newest cuffs are gauntlet shape, and worn outside the sleeves. They are plain white linen, and fully six inches deep.

ALEXANDER ALEXANDREVITCH, Czar of All the Russias, is never weary of adding to his splendid collection of birds' eggs and postage-stamps, both of which he himself commenced in his boyhood.

AMONG the many other attractive qualities possessed by the Princess May is an intense love of children, and this most womanly trait will win for her the sympathy of all the mothers in the kingdom over which she will one day reign.

THIS year Her Majesty will be seventy-three years old. Only two other Sovereigns of England attained the age of the Queen—viz., King George II., who lived until he was seventy-seven, and George III., who lived out eighty-two birthdays.

AT eight o'clock on New Year's morning the Queen and the other Royal ones staying with her take Holy Communion privately, and they always have morning prayers before breakfast, when Her Majesty asks a blessing on the good things at the Royal table and says grace herself.

MRS. GLADSTONE has been her husband's companion at all times and on all occasions since her marriage. She is invariably at hand when he speaks in Parliament, and when the speech is over, she looks after his personal comfort by wrapping him in shawls or bringing him a cup of tea to refresh him. Mrs. Gladstone bears her age well. Her form is quite straight, her eyes sparkle, and her conversation is as bright and clever as it ever was.

THE Princess of Wales, though no longer young, has borne the confinement of her son's sick-room marvellously well; and neither the close attention to the invalid nor the maternal anxiety which she actually felt has had more than a passing effect on her health. Our Own Princess is not only blessed with the appearance of perpetual youth, but she has a splendid constitution, which, aided by regular habits and much out-door exercise, has sustained her at those momentous periods of her life, when she has been most severely tried by the serious indisposition of those near and dear to her.

THE Royal wedding is to take place at Windsor only because it has been found impossible to arrange for an adequate ceremonial at Buckingham Palace. The announcement that the precedent of the marriage of the Prince of Wales is to be observed is incorrect. The wedding is to be semi-state, and the ceremonial will be arranged by the Prince of Wales, who intends to take the whole management of the function into his own hands. It is not the case that the honeymoon will be spent at Osborne, but Sandringham.

STATISTICS.

THERE are about fourteen hundred places of worship in London.

THE average height of clouds above the earth is between one and two miles.

THE banana produces 44 times more food than the potato, and 131 times more than wheat per acre.

THERE are some 1800 professional women painters, engravers, and sculptors in Paris, in addition to designers on fans and like articles.

THE word knot, signifying a certain distance over water, is one-sixtieth of a mean degree of the earth's meridian, which in figures is 6,076.812 feet, 2025.6 yards, or one mile and 26.58 yards.

GEMS.

MAN learns by experience, and the most valuable experience is the one which has ended in failure.

IF those who are searching after a "sure cure for drunkenness" would quit drinking while they are looking for it they would find it.

PEOPLE that make puns are like wanton boys that put coppers on the railroad tracks; they amuse themselves and other children. But their little trick may upset a freight train of conversation for the sake of a battered witticism.

WHENEVER it can consistently be done it is best to avoid the man who argues. It is extremely unpleasant to feel that you are in the witness-box of cross-examination and to be obliged to prove your simplest propositions by all the "ologies" and "isms" known to science.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

APPLE SHAPE.—Pare, cut, and quarter two pounds of apples, put them into a saucepan with a pint of water, one pound of sugar, two tablespoonfuls of blackberry or red currant jelly, and one ounce of isinglass. Boil gently, and beat the mixture until perfectly smooth. Pour into an oiled mould for the night; when set, turn into a glass dish garnished with clotted cream.

PINK APPLE SNOW.—Pare, core, and boil six large apples to a pulp, and press them through a sieve. Sweeten to taste, and then to every tablespoonful of apple add a teaspoonful of currant jelly. Whisk the whites of six or seven eggs with two heaped teaspoonfuls of sugar, and when frothing add them to the apple mixture, whisking all together until quite light. Pile high on a glass dish, and add a currant or strawberry jelly garniture. This dish is one very suitable for children and invalids.

SEED CAKE.—Half pound flour, quarter pound peel, quarter pound butter, three eggs, six ounces sugar, quarter pound sultanas, two ounces almonds, half teaspoon baking powder, one tablespoon milk. Put butter and sugar in a basin, and beat them together with a spoon till they are white, then add yolks of eggs, and mix them in; then milk, and mix it; then put in the flour, and stir it well through the rest; then the baking powder and all the fruit. Put the whites of eggs on a plate and beat them up, and add them last. Pour into a papered cake tin, and put into the oven till it is ready. The almonds are skinned and split up, the raisins washed and dried, and the peel cut up in thin stripes. If it is really a seed cake you want, then leave out all the fruit and put half an ounce of carraway seeds instead.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE peach originally came from Persia.

TEN days per annum is the average amount of sickness in human life.

ACCORDING to an expert, diamonds have sex as well as other attributes known to common people.

FOR mildew, which is not an uncommon plant-foe, dust with sulphur or sprinkle with sulphur water. Also dig a little soil into the soil.

THE longest stretch of telegraph-wire in the world through a wholly uninhabited region is that extending through Australia from south to north.

PHOSPHORUS is now being made by decomposing a mixture of acid phosphates and carbon by the heat of an electric arc within the mass.

LIVERPOOL has the largest shipping port in the world; then comes London, and then New York. New York stands second to London, however, as a general commercial city.

THE longest day of the year at New York is fifteen hours, at London sixteen and a half, at St. Petersburg nineteen, at Tornøe, Finland, twenty-two, and at Spitzbergen three and a half months.

WE are already accustomed to the presence of watches in bangles, card-cases, umbrella and stick-handles, and fans. It has now been introduced into the crystal door handle of a shop in Bond-street. The same thing has been done in the handle of a brougham as a present to one of our great doctors, and it is, he says, a great convenience to him.

WITH a view of preventing the erroneous use of poisons in place of other drugs, by chemists and druggists, an inventor has brought out an electrical arrangement to secure the automatic announcement of any change in the position of the bottle. The apparatus is so arranged that should a bottle containing poison be taken down from its usual position on the shelf, a kind of electrical push-button is released, completing a circuit and causing an electrical bell to ring.

HOW many people have ever eaten jelly made from elephants' tusks? Yet it is very good indeed. In the English factories, where many tons of ivory are sawed up annually to make handles of knives and forks, great quantities of ivory dust are obtained. The dust is sold at the rate of sixpence a pound, and when properly boiled and prepared it makes the finest, purest and most nutritious animal jelly known. Years ago ivory jelly was a very fashionable remedy and much sought for.

THE property of travellers on Continental railways is more protected than was thought to be the case. The Paris courts have decided that when a railway company is paid for a sleeping car it becomes practically an hotel-room, and by French law hotel-keepers are unreservedly liable for thefts from the rooms of their guests. This decision is strictly confined to sleeping cars, since in the ordinary way unregistered luggage could only be taken through negligence of the traveller.

THE following are a few of the inventions and discoveries which have originated or been made practical within the past half century: Ocean steamships, railways, street car-lines, the telegraph, ocean cable, telephone, photography, photography, and a score of new methods of picture-making; aniline colours, kerosene, electric lights, steam fire-engines, chemical fire-extinguishers; anaesthetics and painless surgery; gun-cotton, nitro-glycerine, dynamite, and a host of other explosives; aluminium, magnesium, and other new metals; electro-plating, spectrum analysis, and the spectroscopic; andiphone, pneumatic tubes, electric motors, electric railways, electric bells, typewriters, steam and hydraulic elevators, steam-heating, vestibule cars, cantilever bridges.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

JONAS.—Mrs. Gladstone is not Irish, but Welsh—daughter of a Welsh baronet.

L. B.—King's evidence can be admitted in case of any crime, not restricted to murder.

ROBIA.—Pobledonostoff is the power behind the throne of the Russian Czar.

MILICENT.—Pumice stone is to be had of any painter or colourman. A pennyworth is ample for your purpose.

DUNCE.—King's Lynn is in Norfolk, Wisbeach is in Cambridgeshire, and Sutton Bridge is in Lincolnshire.

GIBBY JANE.—Fleas are sometimes got rid of by carrying camomile flowers about the person.

EVILINK.—The quotation is, we know, from Dryden's plays, but we are not able to recall the particular one.

MATTIE.—You will not get information of a man who deserted 37 years ago; but write and wait answer.

L. F.—The authorities will take such proof of age as they can get—a line from a mother if no other is obtainable.

JACQUES.—A person sentenced to penal servitude for life can never claim his release, but the Crown may grant him his liberty at its discretion.

VALOUR.—There is no recruiting in this country for the Cape Mounted Rifles. The force (which is small) is recruited exclusively in the colony.

FORGET-ME-NOT.—You can find the "Prisoner of Chillon" in almost any collection of Lord Byron's works. It is one of his best minor poems.

GEORGE.—Illegitimacy has no heirs, consequently another illegitimate son of the same mother cannot take anything belonging to his deceased brother.

ANXIOUS.—An artilleryman who has served eighteen years, ten of which were in India, and who has been discharged in consequence of an accident to his thumb, is entitled to a pension.

LAURIE.—If a soldier deserts when he has given 12 or 13 months' service, he must at the end of his time fill up the lost time. A soldier must keep clear of crime five years before he can claim service again.

GRAHAM.—The intrinsic value of a rupee changes according to the market value of silver. What it is at any particular time you may ascertain in the money columns of the daily papers.

A SUFFERER.—There are endless preparations declared to contain all the constituents of the various juices, or secretions that assist digestion in the human system, but none can be said to be successful.

WORRIED MOTHER.—If your boy is an habitual truant he may be sent to a truant school; but you should go before the committee, and explain what you say about the boy's treatment.

TRIOUBLE.—A widow is not liable for her deceased husband's debts unless he left property sufficient to pay them. She is not obliged to pay his debts out of her own earnings after his death.

CORIOUS.—Rossa has, on paper, an army of 800,000 on a peace footing, and of 1,151,000 on a war footing; Italy an army of 2,590,000 on a war footing; but these figures are, standing alone, very misleading.

TEMPERANCE.—A music and dancing license is only required for a "house, room, garden, or other place kept or used for public dancing, singing, music, or other public entertainment of a like kind."

A. C.—"The Mersey" is rather a vague phrase; it comprehends both river and estuary, or firth. The Manchester Ship Canal runs alongside the river for some miles, and finally enters "The Mersey" at Eastham.

H. F. T.—A lodger's goods are not distrainable for rent due by his landlord; but when the landlord is distrained upon, the lodger, to protect himself, must hand to the bailiffs a list of the goods belonging to him, and must also tender any rent then due from him.

T. B.—There is, properly speaking, nothing below the granite, although there are not many parts of the earth's surface where the stratified rocks have not been greatly broken up and curiously intermixed by convulsions of the internal forces.

FAVOURITE.—Chiffon, gauze, grenadine, barege, foulard, white cashmere, serge, delaine, and velvete, as well as cashmere showing delicate tints of blue, pink, mauve, green and yellow, are all employed for girls' dancing school and party dresses.

LOUISA.—The yellowish-brown colour of Chinese nankeen is that of the natural tint of the cotton, and is not imparted by dyeing. The name is derived from the city of Nankin (or Nanking), to which place the manufacture of these cotton-stuffs was once peculiar.

DON QUIXOTE.—We have no information about the officer you name, nor can we suggest any source to which you might apply with hope of obtaining it. A man who died nearly ninety years ago is more than forgotten. It is impossible to realise that he ever existed.

T. B.—Write to Secretary, Civil Service Commission, Cannon-row, Westminster, S.W., asking him to be good enough to send you particulars regarding examinations for clerkships in Indian Civil Service, and dates and places of next examination. All information in that way.

PADERNAWSKI.—It is almost impossible to give in type pronunciation of foreign proper names. Paderewski is a case in point. Roughly you may follow the spelling, with accent on third syllable.

COLIN.—Sir Colin Campbell was not present at Waterloo. He fought through the Peninsula Campaign, being frequently wounded—once it was thought mortally; but when Waterloo was fought he was in America, having gone out with the expedition to that country.

SWART SAVANTERN.—To remove freckles, use equal parts of pure glycerine and bright water, applied every night, and allowed to dry on the face. If the freckles are of long standing, apply rusty-nail water. The daily use of borax and rose-water has been also recommended to remove freckles, and keep them away.

PUZZLED.—All years end at twelve o'clock midnight on 31st December. The period is regulated by the time the earth takes to go round the sun, which is 365 days odd hours and minutes, and to keep things straight an extra day is introduced into every fourth year to use up these odd hours.

MILTON.—Broadly stated, freehold property is a man's own to dispose of as he sees fit; copyhold property is held subject to certain manorial rights and customs, and the tenure is renewable on payment of certain fines to the lord of the manor. What these are in any particular case we cannot undertake to say.

THAT SONG OF VERDI'S.

They were singing some ballad of Verdi's;

I have now forgotten the name,
But your voice was low and tender,
And my heart—oh! my heart was flame.
And how could I listen to them,
And how could you care to hear,
When the dreams that we both were dreaming
Seemed drawing so near, so near?

Oh, sweet was that song of Verdi's,
But somehow our hearts in tune
Sang notes that were sweeter, dearer,
For was it not love's bright tune?
Not June? Was it April, rather,
When so sunshiny but ends in rain?
Ah, well! was all the sweeter
That it never came again.

I never had seen you so gracious;
On mine with their love dwell your eyes;
I spoke fondest words with bold daring;
You made no rebuking reply.
You gave yourself up for one moment,
Or so I then fancied, to me;
And I—had the world any pleasure,
If I from your thralldom were free!

Who thought while that sweet song of Verdi's
Was tenderly breathed on the air,
That e'er they could vanish so quickly,
The dreams that were builded so fair!
Did we laugh the next day at our folly,
And put it all down to the song?
Could that make our hearts beat so wildly,
Even though it did not last for long?

I know that the song was by Verdi,
But can you not tell me the name?
I'll have someone sing it to soothe me,
And see if 'twill come back the same.
I want it to seem that you're near me;
To dream you are mine once again;
To feel I could love you for ever,
And know that you love me as then.

L. W. E.

A BAD LOT.—No Phoenix Park murderer was admitted to King's evidence after he had been condemned, but two were called as witnesses after being taken into custody for murder, were afterwards tried as modified indictments, and received sentence of lengthened terms of imprisonment. Timothy Kelly was thrice put up for trial.

MARTHA.—To make vinegar candy, to one quart of good treacle add one teaspoonful of good elder vinegar. Boil until it reaches the point where a little dropped into cold water will become very hard and brittle. Pour into shallow platters until cool enough to be handled, and form into a large roll which may be drawn to any size and cut off in sticks.

SWEET-TOOTH.—To make jubilee paste, take of gum-arabic one pound; dissolve in a pint and a half of water, and add one pound of sugar. Evaporate to a very thick consistency, and when cooled a little, but while still warm enough to run, turn into shallow tin pans previously oiled. Any flavour may be added before turning it out.

A. B. C.—There is no such thing as a quarterly tenant, unless by special agreement that a quarter's notice at any time shall be given and received. When rents are paid quarterly, without such agreement, the tenancy is yearly, and the tenant must give and is entitled to receive six months' notice, ending with the date of taking the premises.

BASHFUL JOE.—1. Gloves, slippers, or fan are all appropriate, and the young lady will think none the less of the young gentleman if he gives all three, but gloves and fan by themselves or slippers alone would be ample. 2. The presentation is made upon consideration of the expense the lady is put to in doing her utmost to reflect honour up on the gentleman by the richness and good taste of her attire.

ECONOMY.—Put the gloves on your hands and wash in warm soap and water, strafe and hang out to dry in sun, but not at the fire. Strafe while still damp. These cheap gloves are hardly worth cleansing. Better to dip them in strong coffee, or one pennyworth of permanganate of potash from chemist, dissolved in a cupful of water.

WARRIOR.—A gun weighing 120 tons, manufactured by Krupp for a Russian fortification, sent a 2,600 lb. shot, four feet long, clean through 19 inches of armour at 1,000 yards distance, the projectile going 1,312 yards beyond the target after piercing; the barrel of the gun was 44 feet long, the bore 16½ inches, greatest diameter of gun 6½ feet, charge of powder 700 lbs.

A. E. P.—The trade winds which aided Columbus in his voyage to America, have been known to Europeans since the end of the fourteenth century. The limits within which they prevail vary from month to month with the varying position of the sun, the range being about ten degrees. It is stated that in general the trade wind is not accompanied by clouds, and that the air is comparatively dry.

CLAUDE.—Pure air is always invisible; steam is air out of water, and it is invisible as long as it is contained in a chamber as hot as itself. The moment it issues into a cold sphere the water in it condenses, and it is then "seen" in the form of soft-rolling fog or mist. Watch it escaping from a pipe and will note an interval of two or three inches between the pipe and the first appearance of the white steam; condensation beginning at that point.

VACATION.—If you gave a written order and made it conditional on the goods being delivered on a certain day, you may refuse to accept delivery after that date but unless there was a specific agreement to that effect you could not recover for loss through non-delivery. If negligence on the part of the railway company can be proved damages may be recoverable; but only a solicitor knowing all the facts could advise who should take proceedings.

LONDONER.—Bond-street was named after Sir Thomas Bond. Paternoster-row is said to be so named from the turners of roses, or *Pater Noster*, who formerly dwelt there. It has also been noted as the locality of stationers, printers, and booksellers. Chancery, a celebrated street and crowded thoroughfare in London, is named from the Saxon word *Chance*, or market. Addison in referring to it says, "The inhabitants of St. James', notwithstanding they live under the same laws and speak the same language, are a distinct people from those of Chancery."

CHAIN.—The lake referred to is in Central America. It is named Ilopango and is six miles south-east of the city of San Salvador. It is said to be about fourteen miles long by six broad, and to be purely of volcanic origin. It receives no tributary streams, although it has a small outlet, flowing through a narrow ravine into the Rio Giboa, near the base of the volcano of San Vicente. The surface of the water (not less than twelve hundred feet below the level of the surrounding country) is ruffled by a breeze, it takes a brilliant green colour, and exhales an unpleasant sulphurous odour. The lake is surrounded on all sides by hills high and abrupt, and composed of volcanic stones.

TROUBLED MOLLIE.—The complexion is often impaired by irregularity of living, the inhaling of confined and vitiated air, and indolent habits. To renovate the complexion, frequent exercise in the open air should be taken, moderation observed in eating, and regular hours for retiring and rising adopted. In bathing the face avoid doing so when heated, and use tepid water. Dry well, first with a smooth towel, and afterwards rub the cheeks with a tolerably coarse one. Add to this frequent bathing by means of a tub-bath or a sponge, and more will have been done to benefit the complexion than by any other means. Some ladies make use of dry flannel with which to rub the body.

ROMANTIC ENTH.—The Scots Greys, who are literally "second to none" in the roll of British regiments, and have achieved for themselves a history of which the realm may well be proud, had really a very infamous origin. They were formed out of the forces with which General Dalziel and "Bloody" Claverhouse hunted and butchered the helpless Covenanters. Their title, when first embodied with the regular army, was the Royal Regiment of Scots Dragoons; then they were the Grey Dragoons, then the Scots Regiment of White Horse. At Dettingen they captured the white standard of the French Household troops; at Waterloo, an eagle. They charged to succour the 92nd Highlanders, who ought to have scattered to let them through, but instead grasped at their stirrup leathers and ran on into the charge with them!

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